

RUSSIA'S MARCH TOWARDS INDIA

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RUSSIA'S MARCH

TOWARDS

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BY 'AN INDIAN OFFICER'

VOLUME II.

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CHAPTER XI

1873—1875

THE TURKOMANS OF KHIIVA

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IMMEDIATELY after the fall of Khiva, and before the Treaty of Peace had been concluded, General Kaufmann undertook a campaign against the Yomud tribe of Turkomans, who inhabited a portion of the Khivan Oasis in the vicinity of Iiali.

In justification of this expedition, it was stated that the Turkoman subjects of the Khan of Khiva had never proved to be obedient, and that unless they were made to feel the power of Russia it was probable that as soon as the Russian troops were withdrawn they would recommence their acts of lawlessness and pillage, and would thus, sooner or later, necessitate the despatch of a Russian force to keep them in check.

But the real cause of this attack on the Yomuds

is probably to be found in the failure of Kaufmann's column to gain the first honours in the Khivan campaign. When that campaign was first planned, it had been arranged that Kaufmann should lead the main column from Turkestan, a secondary force being sent only from the Caspian to assist in the undertaking. It was thus fully expected that Kaufmann would gain the entire credit of the conquest of Khiva; and even when the original plans were modified, it was still believed that the Turkestan troops would take the leading part in the operations. The result, however, completely falsified these anticipations, for while Kaufmann and his troops were still struggling across the desert from Khala Ata to Uch-Uchak, Verefkin, with his Orenburg troops, was rapidly approaching the Khivan capital; and after the junction of the Orenburg and Kinderly detachments the united columns continued their victorious advance and reached the capital while Kaufmann was still many miles distant. The brunt of the fighting also had been borne by the Orenburg and Kinderly columns, while Kaufmann's troops had scarcely seen the enemy; and, to crown all, Kaufmann's triumphant entry into Khiva had been marred by Skobelev's successful assault on the north gate of the city and advance through the town to the Khan's palace. There can be no doubt that Kaufmann felt that his share in the campaign had been completely eclipsed by the more brilliant operations of Verefkin's force, and he was therefore not displeased when an opportunity presented itself

whereby his Turkestan troops could obtain a share of the fighting, and thus participate in the rewards and decorations which would be bestowed at the end of the war.

When, therefore, Mahommed Rahim Khan, forgetful of the valuable assistance which the Turkomans had always given him in supplying the best men for the defence of the Khanate, denounced them to Kaufmann as robbers and outlaws, advantage was taken of these complaints to obtain distinction for the Russian troops by an attack on these troublesome subjects of the Khivan ruler. The Khan, who was anxious to regain possession of his artillery, stated that he could not keep the Yomuds in order unless the guns which had been captured were given back to him; and when the question of the war indemnity was being discussed, he, apparently in the hope of having it reduced, declared that he could not be held answerable for its payment, as he could not compel the Turkomans to pay their share of the fine. Kaufmann, therefore, returned to the Khan some eighteen or nineteen of the pieces of artillery which had been captured, and decided to himself enforce payment by the Yomuds of their portion of the war indemnity.

The fact was ignored that, immediately after the capture of Khiva, the Yomuds had sent their elders to the Russian camp with offers of submission, and had then been informed that they would be untouched so long as they lived quietly and abstained from pillage and robbery. It was, moreover, forgotten that when Colonel Glukhoffsky was

sent early in July with a force of cavalry to Lake Sari-Kamish to examine the ancient bed of the Oxus, he and his officers had been treated with the greatest friendliness and hospitality by the Turkomans, and that similar satisfactory relations had been maintained when the Orenburg troops marched to Kone Urgenj and Khojaili. The Turkomans had, it is true, been the chief opponents to the Russian advance on Khiva; but when that city had been captured and it became evident that further resistance would be useless, the Yomuds had formally surrendered; their submission was accepted by Kaufmann; and from that time they had, by no act of their own, given any excuse for the unwarrantable and barbarous attack which was made against them.

However, Kaufmann had determined to attack them to gain glory for himself and renown for his army, and he therefore ordered twenty-five headmen of the tribe to attend on him at Khiva. In compliance with this order, seventeen of the elders presented themselves before the Russian General on July 17, and they were then informed that their tribe would have to pay a fine of 300,000 roubles, one-third of which was to be paid by July 29, while the remaining 200,000 roubles had to be paid before August 3.

To clearly understand the full meaning of this order, it must be borne in mind that the Yomud Turkomans then settled in Khiva had only 11,000 kibitkas (felt tents), with a population of about 55,000 souls, and that this fine therefore meant.

that each family had to pay over twenty-seven roubles within two weeks. The sole wealth of these nomads consisted in their horses and flocks of sheep, and even had these been accepted in payment of this contribution, their position would have been a sufficiently hard one. But, as if for the purpose of preventing any possibility of compliance, it was stated that the fine must be paid in money and not in kind, and, therefore, before the Russian terms could be complied with, it would have been necessary for the Yomuds to find purchasers for their live stock, which, of course, was quite impossible.

If any further proof of the injustice and immorality of this demand were required it is to be found in the Treaty of Peace which Kaufmann himself signed a month later, and which, it must be remembered, had been drafted and sent to St. Petersburg for the Czar's approval before these events took place. In the last article of that Treaty it is stated that, 'as owing to the insufficiency of money, both in the country and in the hands of the Government, the Khivan Government is unable to pay the above sum' (2,200,000 roubles) 'within a short time, the Khivan Government shall, in consideration of this difficulty, have the right of paying the said fine by instalments, with the addition of interest thereon at the rate of 5 per cent. per annum, on condition that during the first two years 100,000 roubles shall be annually paid into the Russian exchequer.' And thus, although on account of the poverty of the people

it was not considered possible for the Khan to collect more than 100,000 roubles per annum, a small section of the population was nevertheless called upon to pay three times the amount within a fortnight.

This in itself should be sufficient to prove the utter extravagance of the Russian demands, and to show that Kaufmann intended to render it impossible for the Yomuds to comply. He, however, was not content with levying this preposterously heavy contribution, but proceeded at the same time to take steps which clearly showed that he did not believe in the possibility of compliance on the part of the Yomuds, and that he was bent on attacking them; for on the very next day (July 18) he wrote a letter to General Golovatcheff, informing him of the fine which had been inflicted, and ordering him to proceed at once with his detachment to Hazavat, and if he saw that the Yomuds were not collecting money to pay the contribution, but were assembling for the purpose of attacking the Russian troops, or even for the purpose of leaving the country, he (Golovatcheff) was to immediately march against their settlement and *'give over the settlements of the Yomuds and their families to complete destruction, and their herds and property to confiscation.'*¹ The Orenburg detachment was also ordered to move to Kizil-Takyr, under Colonel Sarantschhoff, who received similar instructions to attack and slaughter the Turko-

¹ These orders were contained in Letter No. 1167, dated Khiva the 6th of July, 1873.

mans in that neighbourhood in the event of their showing signs of opposition, or any desire to assist their Yomud kinsmen.

At the same time five of the Yomud elders were sent back to their tribe to give information of the fine which was inflicted; but the other twelve elders were detained by Kaufmann as hostages. This detention of men who had come in response to a friendly invitation, and who represented a people whose submission had been previously proffered and accepted, was a flagrant breach of faith, quite in keeping with the general course pursued by Kaufmann in his dealings with the Yomuds at this time.

In accordance with the orders which he had received, General Golovatcheff marched out of Khiva on July 19, with a force composed of eight companies of infantry and eight sotnias of Cossacks, with eight guns, two mitrailleuses, and a rocket-battery. The Hazavat Canal was reached the same day, and the force there remained encamped throughout the next day. On the 21st the advance was continued, and the column was soon passing through a fertile country which was devoid of inhabitants; for the Yomuds, having deserted their homes, were flying for safety to the desert. And then began the wanton and indiscriminate destruction of the Turkoman homesteads, which MacGahan graphically describes in the following words:—‘I was still musing on the quietness and desolation of the scene, when all at once I was startled by a sharp crackling sound behind

me. Looking round I beheld a long tongue of flame darting upward from the roof of the house into which I had just been peering, and another from the stack of nicely-gathered unthreshed wheat near it. The dry straw-thatched roof flashed up like powder, and the ripe wheat-straw burned almost as readily. Huge volumes of dense black smoke rose out of the trees in every direction, and rolled overhead in dark, ominous-looking clouds, coloured by the fiery glare from the flames below. I spurred my horse to the top of a little eminence and gazed about me. It was a strange, wild spectacle. In an incredibly short space of time flames and smoke had spread on either side to the horizon, and, advancing steadily forward in the direction of our course, slowly enveloped everything. Through this scene moved the Cossacks like spectres. Torch in hand, they dashed swiftly across the country, leaping ditches and flying over walls like very demons, and leaving behind them a trail of flame and smoke. They rarely dismounted, but simply rode up to the houses, applied their blazing torches to the projecting eaves of thatch and the stacks of unthreshed grain, and then galloped on. Five minutes afterwards sheets of seething flame and darkling smoke showed how well they had done their work. The entire country was on fire.

‘In half an hour the sun was hidden, the sky grew dark; for, as though the sudden lighting of so many fires had produced some change in the atmosphere, a rain set in—a thing almost unknown

in Khiva, and which added one dismal feature more to the already dismal scene. It was a slow, drizzling rain, not sufficient to put out the fires, but only to beat off the ashes and make them burn brighter ; to drive down the smoke, and make it hang over the trees in heavy, sullen masses, darkening the air and forming a lowering background to the blood-coloured flames. This was war such as I had never before seen, and such as is rarely seen in modern days.

‘ It was a sad, sad sight—a terrible spectacle of war at its destructive work, strangely in keeping with this strange, wild land.’

While the Cossacks were thus wantonly and pitilessly devastating the country, the infantry and guns of the column steadily advanced along the roads, and at about midday it was reported that the Turkomans were in sight. The mass of the fugitives—men, women, and children—were hastening towards the desert, where they hoped to find safety from their enemies ; but, as the Russians approached, a small body of horsemen halted and demanded why their country was being thus invaded, and stated that they numbered many thousands, and that if the Russians persisted in hunting them down, they would fight, and severe would be the punishment which they would inflict on their foes. Such parleying was, however, useless, for the orders which Golovatcheff had received were precise, and he was obliged to prevent the very flight of the Yomuds to the desert which was at that moment taking place ; and, therefore, after

some hesitation, which appears to have been due to his reluctance to cause unnecessary bloodshed, he issued orders for six sotnias of Cossacks to pursue and prevent the escape of the Turkomans.

It was not long before the cavalry overtook the fugitives, who were hampered in their flight by their *arbas* (country carts), cattle, sheep, and families; and then ensued a scene of the wildest confusion and pitiless destruction. The terror-stricken nomads abandoned everything in their efforts to escape from their relentless pursuers, and for a brief space the advance of the Cossacks was checked by the carts which contained the household goods of the fugitives, and by the cattle and sheep which were careering wildly over the plain. But the rocket-battery was then brought up to complete the work of destruction, and while the shrieking missiles tore through the masses of the enemy, who were fast disappearing over a distant sandy ridge, the laggards and stragglers were put to death by the Cossacks. No quarter was given to the men, whether armed or unarmed, and numbers of women also were cut down in the *mêlée*. In this encounter many hundreds of Turkomans were slaughtered, some 2,000 cattle and sheep were captured, and the whole of their worldly goods were destroyed.

It must be remembered that this massacre was perpetrated before the expiration of the time allowed for payment of the first instalment of the fine. It is true that the Yomuds could not possibly have paid, even if the full time had been granted;

but Kaufmann, in his desire for military glory—or what he was pleased to consider as such—did not even give them a chance of paying; and, following up his outrageous demands by still more outrageous actions, he ordered a savage and barbarous attack on these wretched nomads, for which no justification can be found.

On the next day (July 22) Golovatcheff again moved forward, when the same wholesale system of destruction was continued, and the country was devastated for miles on both sides of the line of advance. He reported to Kaufmann that the Yomuds showed no signs of collecting money to pay the fine, but, on the contrary, were assembling either for the purpose of leaving the country or for resisting the Russian advance; and that he had, therefore, in accordance with his instructions, been obliged to attack them and lay waste the country. Kaufmann, therefore, issued another order, dated July 22, in which he expressed his approval of Golovatcheff's actions, and went on to state that he had liberated the elders who had been kept as hostages, in order that they might influence their followers;¹ and he then added: 'If the Yomuds become submissive stop ravaging them, but keep watch of what is being done among them; and *at the least attempt to migrate carry out my orders for the final extermination of the disobedient tribe.*'²

¹ Only ten out of the twelve hostages were liberated, the other two having been killed while making an attempt to escape.

² Letter No. 1217, dated ^{10th}/_{22nd} of July 1873, from General Kaufmann to General Golovatcheff.

On July 23 the column reached the plain of Kizil-Takyr, and on the 25th encamped within about two miles of Iliali, near some gardens on the edge of the desert. Here, at about noon, irregular masses of the enemy were observed advancing across the desert from the west, and two companies of infantry were sent forward to dispute their advance, while the cavalry were ordered to prepare for action. The Turkomans, however, after arriving within about half a mile of the camp, appeared to be disinclined to come to close quarters, and merely contented themselves with galloping backwards and forwards in front of the line of Russian skirmishers.

While this demonstration from the west was occupying the whole attention of the Russians, another large mass of Turkomans advanced from the direction of Iliali, and succeeded in arriving within 200 yards of the camp before they were observed. But this body of Yomuds, instead of boldly attacking the Russians, halted at the edge of the gardens, and began to drive off the camels and horses that were grazing near the camp, thus betraying their position and giving the Russians time to change front to meet the new danger. They thus lost a chance of almost certain victory; for a few moments later the alarm was sounded, and the Russians, who were watching the skirmish on the west of the camp, hurriedly formed in order of battle, and opened a heavy fire on the still hesitating Turkomans. At the same time a portion of the skirmishing line was withdrawn from

the west of the camp, and doubled across to a position from whence they could bring a flanking fire to bear on the enemy, and after this detachment had poured in a succession of volleys the Yomuds turned and fled.

The horsemen on the west meanwhile continued to hover about within a short distance of the camp, and caused considerable annoyance to the Russians, as they carefully abstained from coming to close quarters, and, owing to the superior speed of their horses, could not be overtaken by the Cossacks. But with the defeat of the main body of the enemy on the eastern side of the camp all danger was removed, and, after a little more skirmishing, the last group of nomads retired slowly into the desert, and the first serious encounter between the Russians and the outraged Yomuds came to an end.

In this engagement the Russians lost an officer and five men killed, while the Turkomans must have suffered heavily, although they only left two of their dead on the field. Many Yomuds were seen to fall; but their comrades always carried them off, even when exposed to the heaviest fire.

This battle clearly showed that the Yomuds had made up their minds to fight, and this determination on their part cannot be wondered at, for Golovatcheff's troops had throughout their advance continuously ravaged the whole of the country, and had slaughtered large numbers of the tribe, who, being unable to pay the fine imposed, were guilty of no greater offence than a desire to

migrate into the desert and so to escape from the punishment which was threatened in the event of non-payment. Finding that escape was denied to them, while their continued stay in the country merely meant massacre and the utter destruction of their homes and possessions, it was only natural that the nomads should have eventually turned against their oppressors; and the fact that they did fight—and fight bravely—can in no way be held any excuse for the relentless manner in which the Russians hunted them down and endeavoured to exterminate them.

After this repulse of the Turkomans Golovatcheff's force remained in its camp near Iliali, while information was being collected as to where the main body of the enemy had taken refuge. It having been ascertained that their camp was some five or six miles distant on the opposite side of Iliali, Golovatcheff on the night of July 26 gave orders for an advance to be made at one o'clock on the following morning, hoping to surprise them by a night attack. During the night, however, several alarms were caused by Turkomans who were prowling round the camp, and who were from time to time fired on by the Russian picquets; and, finding that his movements were being so closely watched, Golovatcheff at the last moment issued orders postponing the advance for a couple of hours.

At three o'clock on the morning of the 27th, just as the force had fallen in and was awaiting orders to advance, a series of wild, unearthly yells

suddenly broke the stillness of the night, and, before any one had time to realise what was happening, a mass of Turkoman horsemen burst into the camp and made a furious onslaught on the astonished Russians. For some moments there was a confused hand-to-hand struggle; the Cossacks, who had a few minutes before marched out of the camp, fell back in disorder, and the Turkomans, pushing their caps over their eyes, penetrated the Russian line in several places and fought with fierce determination.

Golovatcheff was wounded by a sabre cut on the arm, Colonel Friede, the chief of the staff, also received a bullet wound in the head, and a panic and massacre were imminent; but the Russian infantry, encouraged by the cool bravery and presence of mind of their General, displayed the greatest steadiness, and, pouring in a succession of well-directed volleys, soon checked the advance of the enemy; and, after a desperate struggle, as daylight broke the Yomuds were seen to be flying across the plain in full retreat. In spite of the suddenness of the attack and the determination with which the Turkomans came to close quarters, the Russians only lost forty killed and wounded, while their opponents afterwards acknowledged a loss of about 500.

As soon as the sun rose Golovatcheff, carrying out his original intention, marched towards the north-west in search of the Turkoman camp. Passing Iliali, the column advanced without seeing any signs of the enemy till about nine o'clock in

the morning, when large bodies of horsemen appeared in sight and hovered about on the flanks of the Russian column. They, however, kept at a respectful distance, and confined themselves to attacks against advanced parties of the Cossacks, for whom they appeared to have the greatest contempt. Their object evidently was to delay the Russian advance in order to give time for their families to escape, and in this they were partly successful; for, on account of their demonstrations, the Russians could only advance slowly, and had frequently to drive back with infantry and artillery fire such bodies of the enemy as ventured to approach too near to the column.

The Yomud camp was hidden behind some low sand-hills, and, although Golovatcheff's force passed within two miles of it, it was not discovered, and the column, marching past it, encamped on the banks of the Ana Murad Canal, on the site of an old fortified camp which had been prepared by Mahommed Rahim Khan during one of his numerous wars with his Turkoman subjects. The Yomuds, finding that the Russians had marched past them, doubled back, and hastened in a southeasterly direction through the country which Golovatcheff had traversed during his advance. But, although they thus gained several hours' start, the Russians got on their trail during the next day, and, overtaking them on July 29, killed hundreds of them, and succeeded in capturing 5,000 head of cattle, 119 camels, and about 3,000 arbas laden with various articles of property.

In the meanwhile Kaufmann, who had remained in Khiva, had received no news from Golovatcheff for several days, as all communication had been cut off by the Turkomans. He therefore left Khiva on July 27, and marched to Iliali, where he arrived and joined hands with Golovatcheff's detachment and the Orenburg troops on the 31st.

While there he issued a proclamation, calling upon the other Turkoman tribes to pay a fine of 310,000 roubles within a week; but, on the elders presenting themselves before him and declaring the utter impossibility of collecting such a large sum at so short a notice, he extended the period of payment to twelve days, and permitted half the amount to be paid in camels.

Fearing that they would suffer the same destruction as had fallen upon their kinsmen, these sections of the tribe did their utmost to comply with the cruel demand; but although they gave up their horses, camels, cattle, and household goods, and even though the women stripped off their trinkets and tawdry jewellery and gave them over to the enemy to save the lives of their husbands, fathers, and sons, yet when Kaufmann left Iliali on August 15 (the day after the expiration of the time granted for payment) one-third of the full amount of the fine had not been paid. He therefore took with him twenty-seven of the elders as hostages, and commenced his return march to Khiva. Passing on his way through the lands of the Yomud tribe of Bairam-Shali, he imposed on them a further fine of 108,000 roubles, and, taking

fourteen of their chiefs as hostages till the sum should be paid, he reached Khiva on August 23.

Thus closed this first campaign against the Turkomans of Khiva, the chief result of which was that they became imbued with feelings of the greatest hostility and bitterness against the Russians. It was not probable that a warlike race of uncivilised nomads would readily forget the slaughter and destruction which had been so suddenly and unprovokedly inflicted upon them, and there is no doubt that the savagery and inhumanity which marked the Russian operations against these miserable tribes left a long legacy of hatred and revenge which has not even yet been forgotten. To satisfy the ambition of one Russian commander, and to compensate a body of Russian soldiers for their disappointment in having failed to take a leading share in the conquest of Khiva, a wanton and unjustifiable attack was made on these people, who were slaughtered in a wholesale and pitiless manner, while their homesteads and property were, at the same time, destroyed with reckless barbarity.

Truly, indeed, might MacGahan say that it was a war such as he had never before seen, and such as is rarely seen in modern days; for this attack on the Turkomans of Khiva was carried out in a manner which was a disgrace to the Russian nation, and which has left an indelible stain on the character of the Russian troops in Central Asia.

The Treaty of Peace with Khiva having been signed on the day after Kaufmann's return to the capital from Iliali, there was no further necessity

for detaining the Russian troops in the Khanate, and they began to return homewards. The Orenburg column, which, at the close of the Turkoman campaign had returned to Kizil-Takyr, remained there till August 13, and then commenced its return march to the Emba, where it arrived on October 6, and the various detachments composing the column, then separating, marched to their old quarters at Orenburg, Orsk, and Uralsk.

The Mangishlak detachment was the next to leave. Quitting Khiva on August 21, they reached Kinderly on the 24th of the next month, and by October 18 had all been transported across the Caspian to Petrovsk.

The Turkestan column left Khiva on August 24, and returned via Khanki and Shurakhana. This column crossed the Oxus at Khanki, at which point the river divides into three channels. There was only a limited and insufficient number of 'kayuks,' and, in crossing the islands, the baggage had first to be transferred from the boats into carts, and then back again into the boats after the islands had been crossed; the result being that it took ten days for the whole force to cross the river. Then Kaufmann having selected a site on the right bank just below Shura-Khana for the new Russian fort of Petro-Alexandrovsk, the troops were employed in constructing defensive works. A garrison of two battalions of infantry and 200 Cossacks, with six guns, was left there under Colonel Ivanoff; and on September 17 the rest of the Turkestan troops continued their return journey, the cavalry crossing

the Kizil-Kum Desert to Fort Perovski, while the infantry returned by the route by which they had advanced, and reached Tashkent by October 25.

But the Russian forces had scarcely left the oasis when the Yomuds began to give evidence of the spirit of hatred and revenge which had been roused by the severe treatment which they had just received. General Krijhanoffsky, the Governor-General of Orenburg, had declared that Kaufmann's attack on the Turkomans was perfectly unnecessary and likely to cause serious trouble. He said: 'It will now be necessary to send expeditions against them for many years to come; their country will be a second Caucasus, and in the end we shall be obliged to take possession of it.' This prediction was very soon realised, for in October 1873 they began plundering the villages of the Usbegs and Kirghiz, who had been friendly to the Russians, and forced the Kirghiz to migrate to the right bank of the Oxus, while at the same time the Tekké Turkomans of Merv plundered caravans of stores intended for the garrison of Petro-Alexandrovsk.

For more than twelve months, with short intervals, Colonel Ivanoff was occupied in quelling these disturbances, enforcing the payment of taxes, ravaging whole settlements, and putting the inhabitants to death; and while he was thus crushing the Turkomans of Khiva, the Russian authorities on the Caspian were similarly employed in dealing with the nomads on the borders of Persia.

The increasing importance of the establishments on the eastern shores of the Caspian rendered it

necessary that a new military district should be there created, which should be independent of the Turkestan authorities, and be directly under the orders of the Lord-Lieutenant of the Caucasus. Accordingly, when the Grand Duke Michael, in November 1873, submitted to his brother, the Czar, a proposal for forming the whole region between the Caspian and Aral Seas into such a district, subordinate to the Government at Tiflis, Lomakin—now promoted to the rank of general—was at once sent to Krasnovodsk to settle the necessary details, and to report on the measures which should be adopted to develop the country and bring the Turkoman tribes into subjection. He soon had an interview with some of the Turkoman elders, who promised to meet him again in the following spring, and to bring with them several of the leaders of other tribes ; and, in spite of the opposition of the Russian Foreign Office and Finance Ministry, the Grand Duke's project was approved of by the Emperor in an order dated March 21, 1874, whereby the new Trans-Caspian military district was formed, with Lomakin as its first governor. This district included the whole of the eastern shores of the Caspian from Mertvii Kultuk Bay on the north to the river Atrek on the south, and as far eastwards as the borders of the Khanate of Khiva. All the islands near the coast were included in this new district, and Krasnovodsk was selected as the headquarters of the administration.

Shortly after Lomakin's appointment to this new post, he issued a circular to the Ak-Ata-Bai

branch of the Yomud tribe, informing them that he had been invested with supreme authority over the Atrek and Gurgén districts, and calling upon them to maintain order. Copies of this circular were also sent to the other Turkoman tribes occupying the country between the Caspian and the Oxus; and the result was that the principal elders of the Yomuds and some of the Akhal Tekké chiefs visited Ashurada, and declared their friendship for the Russian Government. During the summer of 1874 Lomakin made a short reconnaissance up the Atrek river from Chikishliar, and constructed a small fort on the river bank; but no other military movements could be made that year, as his time was fully occupied in organising the administration of his new district, and in opening negotiations with the neighbouring chieftains.

In spite of the friendly professions of the Turkoman elders, a band of some 500 Tekkés, in October 1874, made a raid on the village of Dashli, some twenty-five miles from Krasnovodsk, when they killed 80 of the inhabitants and carried off 150 prisoners. Letters were then sent to Sofi Khan, the chief of Kizil-Arvat, demanding the release of the captives, and shortly afterwards 90 of the prisoners were sent back; and on February 19, 1875, Sofi Khan himself arrived at Krasnovodsk, with a large following of Tekké chieftains. These men were received by Lomakin with great distinction: he presented Sofi Khan with a gold medal attached to a ribbon of the order of St. Stanislaus, and also gave him a khalat of silver cloth; while

robes of honour were freely distributed among his adherents. The whole party was taken for a short trip on one of the vessels of the Caspian flotilla, and they were then sent home, after the advantages of Russian rule had been carefully instilled into their minds. This visit of Sofi Khan was a matter of great importance to the Russians, for thereby they got into friendly relations with the Tekkés of Kizil-Arvat, and thus to some extent prepared the way for an advance into the more eastern portions of the Akhal Oasis.

Shortly before the reception of these chiefs General Lomakin had visited Tiflis, and while there he had obtained the approval of the Grand Duke Michael to the despatch of a strong expeditionary force to the Turkoman settlements on the Atrek. The Czar, however, refused his consent to the despatch of any additional troops from the Caucasus, and Lomakin therefore decided to make a thorough exploration of the Uzboi—the ancient bed of the Oxus.

This expedition left Krasnovodsk in two detachments, one of which crossed to Michaelovsk in boats, while the other marched round by land to the wells of Mulla Kari. There the two parties re-united, and the whole force advancing on June 8, 1875, reached the Uzboi three days later. Marching along the old bed of the Oxus, the Russians reached Igdi on June 20, where a camp was formed, while a surveying party pushed forward, with a small escort, through Bala Ishem to Sari-Kamish, where, in accordance with a previous arrangement,

it was met by an escort of Khivans; and after a complete survey of the Uzboi and Sari-Kamish Lakes had been made, it returned to Krasnovodsk by the direct route through the country which Markozoff had traversed in 1871.

In the meanwhile the main body remained at Igdi for ten days, during which time small detachments were sent eastwards to cover the surveyors from possible attacks by stray bands of Tekké Turkomans. On July 1 Lomakin received news that the topographical party had safely reached Sari-Kamish, and he therefore started on his return march towards Mulla Kari, where the force arrived on July 15, having lost only two men during the whole of the operations. This expedition produced a considerable impression on the Tekkés, who, when Lomakin was at Igdi, sent in a deputation consisting of several of their elders with declarations of their submission and proffers of service; and, again, during the return march to Mulla Kari other parties brought provisions, carpets, and sheep for sale, and did all they could to propitiate the Russians.

After giving his troops a short rest Lomakin marched southwards towards the River Atrek, passing *en route* the great fresh-water lakes of Shairdi and Bugdaili, where he found large encampments of the Jaffar Bai and Ak-Ata-Bai branches of the Yomuds, who, though formerly hostile, had, since 1874, tendered their submission and promised to raise a force of 500 horsemen to keep the Tekkés in check. About 25 miles to the

south-east of Bugdaili the Russians came to the ruins of Mest-Devran (Mestorian), where they found the remains of what must have been a large and important ancient city; and a few miles farther on, at Musjid, a large number of dilapidated temples and shrines marked the site of an ancient burying-ground of considerable extent. Other signs also were not wanting to prove that the surrounding region had once been a well-populated and flourishing district, for traces of a large aqueduct were clearly seen, which at one time carried water from the Atrek to Mest-Devran. This conduit was apparently carried across the Sumbar in large earthen pipes over a couple of large bridges, and there was a series of mounds stretching from Chat, past Mest-Devran, to Kara Tepé on the shores of the Caspian, each of which was crowned by a small fort, evidently for the purpose of protecting the water-supply and to defend the settlement from the inroads of the neighbouring nomads. On reaching the Atrek Lomakin came across several more encampments of Yomuds, who appeared to be friendly, and after advancing up the river as far as Chat the column returned to Krasnovodsk.

Before continuing the account of Russia's further operations in the Trans-Caspian district, it will be necessary now to turn once again to the affairs of Khokand, as serious events there took place which necessitated Russian interference, and culminated in the annexation of the whole of that Khanate to Russia.

CHAPTER XII

1865—1876

ANNEXATION OF KHOKAND

Insurrections in Khokand—Abdur Rahman Aftobatcha—Attack on Russian Embassy—Battle of Makhram—Capture of Andijan—Annexation of Khokand to Russia—The Alai Expedition—Exploration and annexation of the northern part of the Pamir region.

WHEN Khudayar Khan was in July 1865, for the third time, re-instated as Khan of Khokand, he found that his dominions had been very considerably reduced in size by the Russian conquest of Tashkent, and by the Bokharan occupation of Khojent. In the following year Khojent and Ura-tepé were wrested from Bokhara by General Romanoffsky, and were permanently incorporated in the Russian dominions; and Khudayar's authority was limited to Ferghana, or the eastern portion of his former kingdom. But although his power was thus curtailed, the Khan, acting on the shrewd advice of his Atalyk (or commander-in-chief), Ata Bek, contrived to keep on good terms with the Russians, and retained possession of his throne for the next ten years.

When Kaufmann arrived at Tashkent at the end of 1867 he informed Khudayar Khan of his

appointment as Governor-General of Turkestan, and entered into negotiations for the purpose of concluding a commercial treaty with Khokand. At first Khudayar objected to the conditions of the proposed treaty, and wished to send an embassy to St. Petersburg in order that he might obtain a direct assurance of peace and goodwill from the Emperor. But he eventually withdrew his objections, and signed a treaty which was approved of by the Czar in November 1868.

In spite of this treaty, however, Khudayar's attitude towards the Russians during their campaign against Samarkand was very suspicious; for he kept his troops in readiness, and was apparently on the look-out for a favourable opportunity to recover Tashkent and Khojent. But the rapid successes of the Russian force, and the brilliant defence of Samarkand, caused him to abstain from hostilities, and for his neutrality on this occasion he was invested with the order of St. Stanislaus.

In December 1869 the temporary difficulty arose regarding Karategin; and again in 1870 there was for a time a dispute between the Khan and Kaufmann, resulting from a demand for indemnity on account of an attack which had been made on Colonel Dennett's force during the Iskander Kul expedition. But these differences were satisfactorily settled; and had Khudayar conducted the internal affairs of his state with the amount of discretion he displayed in his dealings with the Russians, he would most probably have secured a much longer lease of power, and have

postponed the annexation of the Khanate by Russia. He, however, had never been a popular ruler, and had been twice driven from the throne on account of his cruelty and rapacity; and although after his accession to power for the third time he refrained somewhat from open licentiousness and fresh acts of cruelty, still he appeared bent on extorting as much money from his subjects as possible for his own aggrandisement. Taxes, unjustly imposed, increased year by year, and the hatred of the people against their Khan increased accordingly. For a time open rebellion was prevented by the fear of the population that the Russians would interfere in defence of the Khan, who was believed to be completely under Muscovite influence. But eventually, in 1871, the people rose, and although the rebellion was speedily suppressed the cause was not removed, and the popular discontent continued. Khudayar, instead of being warned by this outbreak, continued to impose fresh burdens on his subjects, and in 1873 matters again reached a crisis, when the Kara-Kirghiz of the mountainous region south of Osh and Andijan refused to pay certain new taxes, and even attacked the officials who had been sent to collect them. Troops were sent to enforce compliance, and after a few skirmishes the Kara-Kirghiz retired to their mountain fastnesses, where they were out of reach of punishment.

At this time a son of Mussulman Kuli's, named Abdur Rahman, returned to Khokand from a pilgrimage to Mecca and journey to Constantinople,

to which latter place he had been sent by his brother-in-law, Khudayar Khan, to ask the Sultan for assistance in repelling the Russians. This man held the title of Aftobatcha (i.e. ewer-bearer), and, being the son of the great Kipchak Ming-Bashi, Mussulman Kuli, he had considerable influence amongst the inhabitants of the Khanate. Shortly after his re-appearance in Khokand he was given the command of the Khan's troops and placed in charge of the operations against the Kara-Kirghiz. He soon prevailed upon the rebels to send forty representatives to the Khan to state their grievances, in order that an understanding might be arrived at; and the Kirghiz, relying on the good faith of Khudayar, did so, when, in spite of the Aftobatcha's advice to the contrary, the Khan treacherously had all of them executed. This act so enraged the Kirghiz that they at once recommenced hostilities, and quickly captured Uzkent and Suk and carried the rebellion into the Ferghana Valley. But although Khudayar's troops were unable to successfully cope with the rebels so long as the latter confined their movements to the mountains, as soon as they advanced into the low country they found that they were no match for the Khan's better-armed forces; and at the commencement of the revolt the Kirghiz met with little success in the valleys, large numbers being killed and taken prisoners, while a chief named Mozuffer Khan, who had been put forward as a pretender to the throne, was captured and impaled alive.

But Khudayar's position was daily becoming

more difficult. His Kipchak subjects, who had been ground down by oppression, were ripe for rebellion, and were only waiting for a favourable opportunity to join the Kara-Kirghiz; while his son Nasr-Eddin was intriguing against him. He therefore sent envoys to Tashkent asking Kaufmann for assistance, while the rebels also implored the Russians to intervene and save them from the tyrant who oppressed them. General Kolpakoffsky (who was acting for Kaufmann during the absence of the latter at Khiva) telegraphed to St. Petersburg asking for permission to occupy Khokand in the event of the rebellion continuing; but sanction to the movement was refused, and the rebels began to believe either that the Russians were too weak to interfere, or that they were secretly supporting the Khan.

Shortly after this, Osh, Andijan, Uch-Kurgan, Suzak, and Balikchi were captured by the insurgents; Abdur Rahman, who from the first appears to have favoured the rebel cause, soon afterwards shut himself up in the small fort of Tiura-Kurghan, near Namangan, and refused to take any further action; and the rebellion was not suppressed until the beginning of winter.

In 1874 the popular discontent was again displayed in plots against the Khan's life. The first of these was for the purpose of placing Khudayar's second son, Mahommed Amin (or Madamin Bek), on the throne; but the Khan was informed of the conspiracy, and put the leading conspirators to death. The Kipchaks and Kirghiz

were not long in finding another claimant to the throne in the person of Abdul Kerim, a grandson of Fazil Bek, Khudayar's uncle; but the Khan again received warning, and requested the Russians to remove Abdul Kerim from Khojent (where he then lived) to Tashkent. This was done, and the Russians at the same time sent Abdul Kaum, who was Abdul Kerim's chief adviser, to Chinkent.

In this year also the inhabitants of the mountainous districts north of Namangan twice broke into open rebellion, but on both occasions the risings were speedily suppressed.

But the existence of Khokand as an independent state was fast drawing to a close. Although the Kirghiz and Kipchaks had repeatedly been defeated, their discontent and hatred of Khudayar were daily increasing, and to this was added a feeling of bitterness against the Russians, who had refused to aid the rebels, and who were thus believed to be on the Khan's side. In July 1875 Nasr-Eddin, the Khan's eldest son, threw in his lot with the malcontents, and the rebellion broke out afresh; and at the same time the Russians, by sending a diplomatic mission to Khokand, gave colour to the popular belief that they were supporting Khudayar, and thus caused the insurgents to embark on a religious war against the infidels.

The despatch of this Russian embassy to Khokand was for the purpose of obtaining Khudayar's consent to the march of a Russian force through Khokand to Kashgar, it having been decided that a force should be sent to punish

Yakoob Beg for his non-compliance with Russian demands. The deputation was led by Mr. Weinberg, of the Foreign Department, who was accompanied by a guard of twenty-two Cossacks; and Colonel Skobelev accompanied the party for the purpose of exploring the Terek Devan Pass between Khokand and Kashgar. In order to propitiate Khudayar and thus to gain his consent to the Russian demands, Kaufmann sent Abdul Kerim with the mission and handed him over to the Khan. This young man was the relation of Khudayar's whom the rebels had, in the previous year, attempted to place on the throne; and his gratuitous surrender by Kaufmann, who thus violated the well-recognised laws of asylum and hospitality, greatly increased the hostility of the Kipchaks and Kirghiz towards the Russians.

The embassy reached Khokand on July 25, 1875; and a few days afterwards news was received that Nasr-Eddin and the Khan's brother, Sultan Murad, had gone over to the rebels, who, having captured Osh, Namangan, Margelan, Andijan, and Asaki, were advancing on the capital, led by Abdur Rahman Aftobatcha, who had also thrown in his lot with the insurgents, and who was really the prime mover in the rebellion.

Khudayar at once made preparations to advance against the rebels, and it was arranged that the march should commence on August 3; but during the preceding night his second son, Madamin Bek, and nearly the whole of his army

went over to the enemy, when the Khan, finding himself thus deserted and rendered incapable of resistance, placed himself under the protection of the Russian embassy. He was accompanied by his younger son, one of his nephews, and by the Atalyk Ata Bek, besides numerous other followers and women, and he also succeeded in carrying off over a million pounds' worth of treasure which he had extorted from his oppressed subjects.

As any further stay in the city was out of the question Mr. Weinberg decided to return to Khojent, at which place he arrived on August 5 after a perilous retreat, during which incessant attacks were made on the long train conveying the Khan's treasure and wives. As soon as Khudayar had thus fled from the country, his son Nasr-Eddin was proclaimed Khan; and although he and the principal leaders of the rebellion sent conciliatory letters to Kaufmann, expressing a desire to live in peace with the Russians, emissaries were at the same time despatched with a proclamation inciting the inhabitants of the Russian frontier districts, as well as those of Khokand, to join in a Holy War against the infidels who were believed to have supported Khudayar in his unjust rule.

General Kaufmann at this time was on a tour of inspection at Vernoye; but on hearing of the outbreak he hurried back to Tashkent, where he arrived on August 12, to find the whole population in the wildest state of alarm and excitement, while

the most extravagant rumours were being circulated and were readily believed.

On August 18 bands of Khokandians raided across the Kurama Mountains, and, occupying the village of Ablik, descended the valley of the Angren, hoping to be able to surprise the Russian post at Tilaou, which was garrisoned by a company of infantry and half a sotnia of Cossacks. Finding, however, that the garrison were on the alert, the insurgents did not attack the post, but contented themselves merely with scouring the neighbouring country and inciting the inhabitants to join them against the Russians, while other parties cut the Russian line of communication between Tashkent and Khojent. Information of these raids reached Tashkent at 2 A.M. on August 19, and four hours later General Golovatcheff started for Tilaou with four and a half sotnias of Cossacks, and at 8 A.M. a battalion of infantry and a division of field artillery marched to his support. On the same day Lieutenant-Colonel Garnoffsky was sent with a battalion of infantry and four guns to reinforce the garrison of Khojent, while Colonel Skobeleff, with two sotnias of Cossacks and a rocket division, patrolled the north-eastern portion of the Kurama district, and prevented the inhabitants from joining the insurrection.

In the meanwhile a large force of Khokandians advanced towards Khojent, and arrived in the neighbourhood of that city on August 20. For the next four days the town was closely besieged, and dense masses of the enemy made repeated

attacks on the principal gates. These onslaughts were, however, repulsed by the garrison; and, on the arrival of reinforcements, Baron Nolde, the commandant, made a sortie on the 24th and routed the Khokandian army after a hard-fought engagement near the villages of Kostakoz and Ispissar.

When Kaufmann ascertained the serious nature of the rising, and found that the Khokandians, not content with the deposition of Khudayar Khan, were resolved to wage war against the Russians, he determined to assume the offensive, and he therefore sent orders to Golovatcheff to march as soon as possible towards Khojent, where the expeditionary force was to assemble. Including the troops in the Kurama district and the detachment which had been sent to the relief of Khojent, the Governor-General found that the troops available for the invasion of Khokand consisted of sixteen companies of infantry, nine sotnias of cavalry, twenty guns, and a rocket-battery, giving a total strength of only about 4,500 men with 1,500 horses. This was by no means a large force with which to undertake the conquest of the Khanate; but Kaufmann knew that prompt action was necessary, as the enemy's forces were daily increasing in numbers; and therefore, after hastily making the necessary preparations, he marched to Khojent, where the force arrived on August 30. The siege had by that time been raised, and the enemy had been driven across the frontier; but information was received that the main Khokandian army, about 30,000 strong, was collected at Makhram, a

fortified village twenty miles beyond Kostakoz on the Khokand road ; and, after the troops had been given a day's rest at Khojent, Kaufmann moved forward on September 1 to try conclusions with the enemy.¹

That evening the Russian column halted at the frontier town of Ab-Khurek on the banks of the Syr Daria, and at daybreak on the following day the advance was resumed towards the village of Karatchkum. As far as Ab-Khurek no opposition was encountered, and it was not until the force had marched some four miles beyond that place that the enemy's picquets were first seen on the right of the line of advance, which lay through undulating country sloping gradually down from the mountains towards the Syr Daria. But soon afterwards large masses of horsemen appeared on the flanks of the Russian column, and by their harassing tactics greatly delayed its advance to Karatchkum, and caused the troops much annoyance and fatigue.

By this time it was well known that the Khokandians had made up their minds to dispute the Russian advance at Makhram, where a large square mud-fort, with high crenelated walls, stands on the edge of the left bank of the Syr Daria, the other three sides being protected by a deep wet ditch. Russian spies and some friendly inhabitants of the

¹ The Russian force which left Khojent for the invasion of Khokand consisted of fifteen companies of infantry, one company of sappers, and eight sotnias of Cossacks, with 20 guns and a rocket-battery. The cavalry were placed under the command of Colonel Skobelev, and were divided into four divisions of two sotnias each.

place had also informed Kaufmann that the enemy had extended the defences by the formation of a fortified camp on the south-eastern side of the fortress, and that they had inundated a considerable portion of the road by which the Russians were advancing.

The commander-in-chief therefore resolved to march round the south of the inundations and take the position in flank and rear; and at five o'clock in the morning of September 3 the Russian troops marched out of their camp near Karatchkum in order of battle, with the cavalry at a short distance behind their right flank. But as soon as they had got past the village large masses of the enemy's cavalry appeared on all sides and resumed their usual tactics, approaching with loud cries and yells to within a short distance of the Russian column, and then retiring at the first signs of any advance on the part of the Cossacks. But the distance from Karatchkum to Makhram is only three miles; and the Cossacks, supported by a few guns and rockets, easily succeeded in keeping the enemy at a respectful distance, while the column steadily pushed forward.

The Russians marched over the low hills to the south of Makhram until they had arrived opposite the south-eastern angle of the fort, when the direction of the advance was changed to the left, and the troops moved towards the enemy's intrenched camp. They had not proceeded far in this new direction when the Khokandian artillery opened fire, but this was not at first replied to by the

Russians, who steadily pushed on until they had arrived opposite the extreme left rear of the enemy's position. The guns then took up their position and opened fire, and, after the bombardment had lasted for about an hour, two battalions of infantry advanced to assault the position. After a quarter of an hour's sharp fighting the intrenched camp was captured, and the Russian troops, then crossing the bridge over the ditch, threw themselves against the gates. Without paying any attention to the fire which was directed against them from the walls, the men, encouraged by the example of their officers, placed their shoulders against the wooden doors, and, keeping time to the tune of a soldiers' chorus, soon forced them open. But little opposition was encountered within the walls, and within an hour such of the enemy as had remained in the fort were killed or took to flight, and the Russian flag was unfurled on the ramparts of Makhram.

While the infantry were thus assaulting the intrenched camp and fortress, the cavalry, under Skobeleff, attacked the masses of Khokandian horsemen which were drawn up in the gardens to the east of the fort, and, after a sharp encounter, put them to flight and pursued them for about ten miles along the banks of the Syr Daria, when large numbers were cut down or drowned in their attempts to escape across the river. On returning from the pursuit the Cossacks came across another body of the enemy's cavalry, who were also quickly routed by a discharge of rockets.

The effect produced by this Russian victory was no doubt very great, especially amongst the surrounding population, who soon came in with professions of submission, and also brought provisions for sale to the troops. The results were at the time greatly exaggerated in the Russian press, which apparently believed that the power of the Khokandians had been completely broken; and Kaufmann also appears to have over-estimated the value of this success, for in a telegram addressed to the Czar, reporting the results of the battle, he said that 'the impression produced in the Khanate by this battle is immense, but one cannot yet appreciate all the consequences of the battle of Makhram.' It was not long, however, before he was enabled to fully realise to what extent the victory at Makhram had conduced to the pacification of the Khanate, and the discovery probably came somewhat in the form of a surprise; for before the close of the year he found himself engaged in a contest which fully taxed the resources of the Russians in Central Asia.

Immediately after this battle General Kaufmann issued a proclamation to the inhabitants of Khokand, pointing out the folly they had committed in having embarked in a Holy War against the Russians, and urging them to seize and deliver to him the ringleaders who, for their own ambitious purposes, had brought such trouble on the Khanate. He advised the people to return to their homes and occupations, and informed them that, while unarmed persons would not be interfered with,

all who were found in possession of arms would be punished; and he concluded by stating that Khudayar Khan had been sent to St. Petersburg, and that he would not return again as their sovereign, as it was known to the Russians that he did not possess the affection of the people of Khokand.

The Russians halted at Makhram for three days, awaiting the arrival of a convoy which had been despatched from Khojent with reinforcements and stores; and on September 7 Kaufmann advanced towards the Khokandian capital, leaving a garrison of two companies of infantry and twenty Cossacks in the Makhram fort, which was made the advanced base for any further operations that might be found necessary. Some miles out of Makhram Kaufmann was met by a deputation from the new Khan, Nasr-Eddin, who apologised for 'the accidental conflict of troops on the frontier, and the consequent unpleasantness.' The chief of this embassy was Ishan Fazil-Achmet Magzoume, and he was accompanied by Mullah Issa Aulié, who was one of the principal leaders of the rebellion and one of the most prominent opponents of the Russians. Kaufmann refused to have anything to do with these envoys, and continued his advance, retaining Issa Aulié as a prisoner until he could give a satisfactory explanation of the part he had taken in the insurrection.

On the evening of the 7th the troops, after a march of fourteen miles, halted at the village of Chaidam-Mazar, and on the following day they reached Bish-Arik, which is some sixteen miles

farther on, and twenty-four miles from the city of Khokand. The country through which the column was now moving was extremely fertile and well irrigated, and during the advance the inhabitants came out to meet the Russians with presents for the general, and bringing bread and salt in token of their complete submission to their conquerors. While marching from Bish-Arik to Kosh-Kupir, on September 9, another envoy arrived from the Khan, accompanied by the prisoners who had been captured at Nau and the various post-stations at the commencement of the war; and the merchants of Khokand also sent a deputation denying complicity in the rebellion, and begging for mercy. All along the route the troops were met by bands of peasants, who were anxious to display their friendship and peaceful intentions. The advance was more like a triumphal procession than the advance of an army through an enemy's country; and on September 10 the capital of Khokand fell into the hands of the Russians without any bloodshed, and even without a single shot having been fired. Shortly afterwards Nasr-Eddin paid Kaufmann a formal visit, and, after the necessary arrangements had been made for the distribution of the troops, the Russian general accompanied the Khan a short way into the town. For five days the Russian troops remained encamped near to the Djir Mosque, outside the city walls, and during this time convoys of provisions, felt tents, ammunition, and other necessaries arrived from Makhram. But the situation was very unhealthy, and the

number of sick increased so rapidly that Kaufmann decided to move the force to another locality, and took advantage of this opportunity to overawe the inhabitants by marching the troops through the city.

But, although the capital of the Khanate had been thus easily captured, the political outlook was by no means promising. Kaufmann's proclamation met with but little response; Osh, Namangan, Andijan, and the other large towns showed no signs of submission, and bands of armed men collected in the hills near Isfara and Makhram, and necessitated the despatch of flying columns from Khojent and Khokand. It is true that on September 11 Kaufmann received a letter from Sultan Murad, Nasr-Eddin's uncle and Bek of Margelan, in which he declared his entire submission to Russian authority, and begged that the former friendly relations might be renewed; and that on the following day another paper was received, bearing the seals of Abdur Rahman Aftobatcha and seventy-five other Kirghiz and Kipchak chiefs, in which these leaders stated that, as the fortune of war was against the Mahommedans, they trusted that Kaufmann would restore peace and quiet in the same way as he had done in the city of Khokand. But these overtures had no result, for when Kaufmann replied that no one desired peace more than he did, and invited the chiefs to meet him in his camp before Khokand, no response was made to the invitation; but, on the contrary, intelligence was received that Abdur

Rahman was busily employed in collecting a fresh force near Margelan, and that he had persuaded or compelled Sultan Murad to join in the movement.

At first these reports were vague and contradictory, but soon more definite information was received, which clearly showed that a formidable force was assembling near Margelan; and Kaufmann therefore set out for that place on September 17 to try and put an end to the Aftobatcha's intrigues. Two days later the Russian column reached Alti-Arik, which is about twenty miles from Margelan, Abdur Rahman being then in occupation of a position at Gurgil, seventeen miles farther on, where he had a force of 10,000 men and 19 guns, and appeared determined to make a stand. He, however, on hearing of the approach of Kaufmann's column, lost heart, and, disbanding his force, retreated into the mountains with a small band of his most faithful adherents. On the 20th the Russians advanced, and took up an excellent position near Margelan, and in the evening the city was unconditionally surrendered.

That night at about nine o'clock the indefatigable Skobelev continued the pursuit of the Aftobatcha with a flying column, composed of the Cossacks, and two companies of infantry in country carts, with four guns and a rocket-battery. Advancing rapidly with his cavalry along the road to Asaki and Andijan, he reached Niaz-Batyr at five o'clock on the following morning. He then heard that Abdur Rahman had turned southwards towards the mountains, and therefore, without

halting, continued the pursuit with his Cossacks towards Ming-Tepé, where he had a sharp encounter with the enemy, who left forty dead on the field, and fled in disorder towards Osh.

By this time the continuous hard marching had begun to tell on the Cossacks' horses, and it was impossible for the chase to be at once continued. The party was therefore obliged to halt at Ming-Tepé for some hours ; but during the night Skobeleff once more started off towards Osh, where he arrived at nine o'clock on the following morning. The city at once surrendered, and by ten o'clock the Russian general was installed in the Bek's palace, where he received the submission of various chiefs and notables. Here, however, he only halted for a couple of hours, and then, with a hundred troopers, he moved towards the Kara Daria ; but as it was reported that the Aftobatcha had been almost entirely deserted by his followers, and as Kaufmann had ordered him not to go too far, he returned through Asaki to Margelan, where he arrived on September 25.

This rapid advance of Skobeleff's and his occupation of Osh, which was one of the chief centres of the Kirghiz and Kipchak population, produced an excellent effect. Andijan, Balikchi, Shahr-i-khana, Asaki, and many of the adjacent villages at once tendered their submission, and Halyk Nazar Parmanatchi—another leader of the insurrection—was also given up to the Russians ; so that out of the three principal instigators of the rebellion, Abdur Rahman alone remained at large. As

the chief towns in the Khanate had thus surrendered, and as the Khokandian forces had been defeated and dispersed, Kaufmann summoned Nasr-Eddin to Margelan, and there concluded a treaty of peace with him, whereby it was arranged that the Khan should pay a war indemnity of 3,000,000 roubles within six years, and should cede to the Russians the whole of the territory on the right bank of the Syr Daria, which extends from Ab-Khurek to the Naryn river, and of which Naman-gan was the chief town. To celebrate this event a general amnesty was proclaimed, which included Issa Aulié, Halyk Nazar, and even those Russian subjects who had taken part in the rising in the Kurama district and round Khojent. But a few days later Issa Aulié, Zulfikar Bek, and Mahomed Khan Tiura were arrested and deported to Siberia, as they had rendered themselves obnoxious to Kaufmann by their persistent and prominent activity in stirring up the people against the Russians.

On October 5 Kaufmann left Margelan to visit the newly-acquired Russian district to the north of the Jaxartes. Namangan was reached three days later; but Kaufmann was not long there before events occurred which showed that the inhabitants of the country had by no means lost their hatred for the Russians, and which gave him an excuse for continuing the military operations and for the final annexation of the remaining portions of the Khanate of Khokand.

Although the Andijanis had long shown marked

hostility towards the Russians, and had only sent in their submission after Skobelev had raided into the immediate neighbourhood of their city, Kaufmann, nevertheless, sent two officers (Mr. Kuhn and Captain Petroff) from Margelan to Andijan for the purpose of making 'scientific investigations.' A more inopportune moment for the pursuit of science could not well have been selected; and it is not surprising that shortly after Kaufmann reached Namangan, these two officers also arrived there and reported that they had been ill-treated by the inhabitants, and that Andijan was once again in a state of rebellion. It is not improbable that Kaufmann expected this result from the 'scientific mission,' for he has not generally displayed any lack of intelligence; and it is impossible to avoid the suspicion that he was not altogether displeased with the turn affairs had taken.

He at this time had at his disposal a sufficiently strong force to overcome any possible resistance on the part of the Khokandians, and the opportunity which thus presented itself of completely subjugating the Khanate was one which was not likely to be neglected. He therefore lost no time in fitting out an expeditionary force to punish the Andijanians, and on October 10 General Trotsky left Namangan with five companies of infantry, eighty-six sappers, and three-and-a-half sotnias of Cossacks, with eight guns and four rocket-stands—the infantry being carried in country-carts. Commencing their march at seven o'clock in the morning,

the troops crossed two branches of the Naryn; and then crossing the Syr Daria—here called the Kara Daria—at Balikchi, they encamped for the night at the village of Chinorat, some five miles farther on. On the following day they marched to the village of Ak-tepé (Kara-Kalpak), which is situated on the banks of the Mussulman-Kuli canal, about four and three-quarter miles from Andijan, and there Trotzky found that Abdur Rahman had collected a large army for the defence of the city, while another considerable force was encamped close by under a Kirghiz pretender to the throne.¹ Skobelev, who was invariably to be found wherever any fighting was expected, was therefore sent out on the morning of October 12 with a sotnia and a half of Cossacks and the rocket-stands, to make a careful reconnaissance of the enemy's position. This party found that the bridges over the canal had been destroyed, and they were compelled to keep close to the left bank of the Syr Daria until they arrived opposite to the northern face of the city; but then they moved southward, and advancing up the Andijani Sar ravine, the intrepid Skobelev succeeded in arriving within twenty-five yards of the enemy's outposts before he was discovered. Then a heavy though badly-aimed fire was opened on the Russians from the tops of the

¹ This man, who is said to have been a humble tobacco-seller of Piskent, assumed the name of Fulad Bek, and pretended to be the son of Atalyk Khan, and grandson of Ali Khan, who had been Khan of Khokand at the commencement of the present century. As a matter of fact, the real Fulad Bek was then living quietly with his mother in Samarkand.

walls and roofs of the houses, and they were obliged to retreat to the plain north of the city, where they were joined by two fresh sotnias of Cossacks from the camp.

During this reconnaissance Skobelev succeeded in checking a sketch which had been prepared by Captain Petroff, and as a result of his report General Trotzky issued orders for the assault of the city on the following day. For this purpose the force was divided into three detachments, which were to push through the city by different routes and unite in front of the palace in the centre of the town. A company of infantry, with two guns and two rocket-stands, was left behind for the protection of the camp and train.

The troops detailed for the assault marched out of the camp at daybreak on October 13, but they had not gone far when swarms of Khokandians, under the pretender Fulad Bek, made a determined attack on the camp. They were, however, repulsed by the detachment which had been left behind; and when the assaulting columns reached the open ground to the north of the town the Russian guns opened fire to cover the advance of the storming parties, which steadily captured barricade after barricade, and, in spite of the stubborn resistance of the Khokandians, succeeded in joining hands in front of the Bek's palace.

But although the original orders had been thus carried out, Trotzky found that it was impossible to maintain his position, as the place was still swarming with armed men who kept up a con-

tinuous fire on the Russian troops ; and he therefore decided to retreat, destroying as much of the town as possible during the retirement. After a short halt the troops fell back, burning everything on their way ; but they encountered just as much opposition while retiring as they had met with during the advance, and their movement through the town was simply a running fight. The greater portion of the city was, however, set on fire, and on reaching his encampment Trotzky added to the destruction by bombarding the place for three hours.

On the following day the bombardment was resumed, and on October 15 the Russians broke up their camp and started for Namangan, burning and ravaging the farms *en route*. During their march along the left bank of the Kara Daria, and until they had crossed that river, they were closely followed by the Khokandians, who made continuous attacks on the column, their opposition being of such an obstinate nature that the Russians took eight hours to cover the first seven versts ($4\frac{2}{3}$ miles) after leaving their camp. Once the river was crossed the attacks ceased, and on October 17 the column was met by General Kaufmann, who had marched out of Namangan to assist Trotzky.

This attack on Andijan was without doubt a failure ; for although Trotzky received the Cross of Saint George and a sword of honour, and although the Russian papers represented the affair in the light of a successful assault, the Russians unquestionably found it impossible to remain in the city.

for more than two or three hours, and their retirement was very naturally considered by the Khokandians to have been nothing less than a forced retreat. That the Russians had sustained a serious check is clearly shown by the subsequent disturbances in Khokand, and also in Namangan and the surrounding district. The people abandoned their villages, and under the leadership of a former Bek of Namangan, named Batyr Tiura, they soon joined the rebellion, and although several flying columns were sent against them they invariably succeeded in evading the troops.

General Kaufmann, however, did not consider that his presence in Khokand was any longer required, and he therefore left Namangan on October 28, after he had handed over the command to Skobeleff, who had been promoted to the rank of major-general in recognition of his brilliant services during the campaign. During the whole of his journey from Namangan to Khojent, Kaufmann's escort was incessantly attacked by bands of Kirghiz and Kipchaks, so that his march had rather the appearance of a retreat than the return of a victorious commander.

Fresh disturbances also broke out in the city of Khokand itself, where the inhabitants, on learning the conditions of the treaty of peace, deposed Nasr-Eddin, and forced him to fly to Khojent, where he arrived alone, and without property of any kind, at the same time as General Kaufmann. After his departure, Khokand was occupied by the adherents of Fulad Bek and Abdul Gaffar Bek (the former

Bek of Ura-Tepé, who had made his way to Khokand at the commencement of the rebellion against Khudayar); and as the affairs of the Khanate were thus in as disordered a condition as they had been when the Russians first interfered, Kaufmann despatched a force to reoccupy Makhram, and thus to cover the Khojent frontier.

In the meanwhile disturbances continued in the newly acquired Russian territory to the north of the Syr Daria, and Skobelev left Namangan with a considerable portion of his command to punish the rebel bands under Batyr Tiura, which were continuing their depredations in the adjacent country. Defeating them at Tiura Kurgan on November 4, he pushed on as far as Chust, but there received intelligence on the night of the 6th which caused him to retrace his steps with the greatest possible speed. As soon as he had left Namangan the Kipchaks had entered the city, and, being joined by the entire population, they began, on the evening of November 5, to attack the Russian camp and unfinished citadel. The small garrison held out until his return at noon on the 7th, and on the following day the Kipchak quarter of the town was heavily bombarded and reduced to ruins. Skobelev shortly afterwards inflicted another defeat on Batyr Tiura's forces at Balikchi, and captured that town.

By these movements the rising in the Namangan district was effectually suppressed; but the disorders in other parts of the Khanate still continued, and Kaufmann therefore ordered Skobelev to march through the country between the Naryn and Kara

Daria, which was considered to be the centre from which the Kipchak malcontents carried out their hostile demonstrations. It was thought that this movement could be made with the most telling effect if it was carried out in the early winter, when the nomads had moved, with their families, into their winter settlements, as they could then be more easily got at, and their escape would be rendered difficult, if not altogether impossible, on account of the deep snow with which the surrounding mountains would then be covered.

Skobeleff therefore left Namangan on January 6, 1876, with a force of 2,800 men, and crossing the Naryn river, moved along the right bank of the Kara Daria, while a detachment was sent, under Baron Meller-Zakomelsky, to reconnoitre the country to the south of the river. The cold at this time was intense; but, in spite of the severe frost (15° R.), the force marched eastwards, ravaging the country, and burning all the settlements which were passed through. The important village of Paitok was completely destroyed, and, while a force was detached to operate against the Kipchak villages in the mountains, the main body continued its advance along the northern bank of the river to Yani-Sarkarba.

As the Kipchaks saw that their settlements were threatened with complete destruction they sent envoys asking for mercy; and these men were informed by the Russian general that the tribes would be spared if they proved their sincerity and complete submission by delivering up the heads of

the rebellion and the parties who had incited the people to enter upon the Holy War against the Russians. As these terms were not complied with the advance was continued, and after some skirmishes on January 12 and 13 the Russians crossed the Kara Daria at Yani-Sarkarba on the following day, and established a fortified camp on the left bank of the stream. A halt was then made for several days while reconnaissances were pushed forward towards the city of Andijan, where Abdur Rahman was reported to have collected a force of 10,000 horsemen and 5,000 foot soldiers, independent of some 15,000 armed inhabitants who had expressed their determination to oppose the Russians to the death.

Two messages were then sent demanding the surrender of the city; but as these were not answered Skobelev determined to assault the place; and, advancing on January 20, he stormed the village of Iskylik, and then commenced the bombardment of Andijan. After the artillery had fired some 500 rounds, two storming columns advanced to the attack and soon penetrated to the centre of the town, where another battery was brought into action and continued the destruction of the place. By the next day all resistance had ceased: Andijan, which had inflicted such a serious reverse on Trotzky's column, was now subdued by the ever-victorious Skobelev; and the Russian troops occupied the remains of the sorely-punished city, Skobelev himself taking up his quarters in the Bek's palace, which Trotzky—in his anxiety to

minimise his defeat—had reported to have been destroyed.

On January 30 news was received that the Khokandians who had fled from Andijan were again assembling near Asaki, and Skobelev therefore marched out and captured that town after severe fighting. This battle, following closely after the capture of Andijan, completely broke the power of the Khokandians. Margelan and Shahr-i-Khana tendered their submission once more; and on February 5 Abdur Rahman, Batyr Tiura, Isfend Yar, and other leaders of the insurrection surrendered themselves unconditionally to Skobelev and threw themselves on the mercy of the Emperor.

By this time also the inhabitants of the city of Khokand found that they were no better off under the leadership of Fulad Bek and Abdul Gaffar Bek than they had been under Khudayar's son, for these two chiefs, taking advantage of their accession to power, appeared determined to enrich themselves as much as possible at the expense of their adherents, while the former also committed the greatest atrocities and seemed to revel in bloodshed. The people, therefore, sent to Nasr-Eddin and begged him to return. The Khan was then at Makhram, and after some hesitation he set out for the Khokandian capital; but before he arrived there the Kipchak and Kirghiz adherents of Fulad Bek attacked him and forced him to return precipitately to the Russian frontier. Skobelev was then ordered to occupy the capital;

and this he did on February 20, when sixty-two guns and a large supply of ammunition and provisions were captured. Fulad Bek in the meanwhile had taken refuge in the mountains to the north of Karategin, and when captured a short time afterwards he was justly hanged for his barbarous actions.

By this time it had been decided that the whole of the Khanate should be annexed. General Kaufmann had left Tashkent in the previous December for the Russian capital, and on his arrival there had persuaded the Czar's Government that such a step was necessary for the security of the south-eastern frontier of the Turkestan province; and on March 2, 1876, the Emperor signed an order by which it was decreed that the whole of Khokand was incorporated in the Russian Empire under the name of the Province of Ferghana, and that this new province was to be under the direction of the Governor-General of Turkestan, who was to reorganise its administration by means of a provisional arrangement such as had been introduced in the Amu-Daria and Zarafshan districts. Immediately on receipt of this order General Kolpakoffsky, who had temporary command during Kaufmann's absence, set out for the city of Khokand, and there proclaimed to the still disquieted inhabitants that the White Czar had 'approved of their submission' and had decided to take them under his protection. Nasr-Eddin, Abdur Rahman, and other leaders of the insurrection were then deported to Tashkent, and General

Skobelev was placed in command of the new province.

Thus Russia had at last gained her long-desired object in obtaining command of the entire course of the river Jaxartes. Many years previously, when the Cossacks had first appeared at the mouth of that river, Russian writers had stated that the acquisition by Russia of the whole length of the Syr Daria was an indispensable part of the scheme for the effective protection of the Kirghiz, in order that the Russian garrisons in the Steppe forts might be readily supplied with fuel, forage, and provisions from the fertile tracts along the upper course of the river. This point had never been lost sight of, in spite of Prince Gortchakoff's repeated protests that no further advances would be made; and by the annexation of Khokand the Russians took up a new line of frontier far in advance of the one which Prince Gortchakoff had, eleven years previously, declared to be sufficient for the protection of the Kirghiz, and which was to have marked the limit of Russian conquests in this direction.

Although the Kara-Kirghiz and Kipchaks of the plains had by this time been completely subdued, the Kirghiz tribes in the mountains to the south-east of the Ferghana Valley had not yet been taught the power of the Russian arms. Several clans under the command of a chief named Abdulla Bek assembled in the mountains to the south of Gulcha, and, as they refused to take part in the general submission, Skobelev was ordered

to march against them and pursue them as far into the mountains as possible, in order that they might be taught that their mountainous retreats were not inaccessible to the Russian troops.

Nor was this the only reason which caused the Turkestan authorities to send an expedition into the inhospitable regions of the Alai and Trans-Alai mountains. It was believed that a war with Yakoob Beg of Kashgar was inevitable, and, although it had been postponed on account of the rising in Khokand, it was still understood that a force would soon be sent to subdue the proud Amir of Kashgaria; and it was therefore necessary that the passes between Ferghana and Eastern Turkestan should be thoroughly explored. Then, again, the Pamir region to the south of the Alai range—a district which had but rarely been traversed by Europeans, and of which only the vaguest knowledge existed—was believed by many to offer a possible line for an advance against India—if not for a large army, at all events for a small corps, which might greatly hamper the British defence—and it was of the greatest importance that this mountainous table-land should be examined and mapped.

In accordance with the instructions which he had received General Skobelev divided his force into three columns, which started from Uch Kurgan, Osh, and Gulcha. He himself accompanied the Gulcha force, which was the principal one, and several scientific officers were attached to his staff, among whom were Captain

Kostenko and Messrs. Oshonin and Bonsdorff, who respectively conducted the geographical, natural history, and geodetical observations. At the end of July 1876 a flying column of 100 Cossacks and a few mounted infantry was sent forward under Prince Witgenstein to the Shart Pass, and shortly afterwards the three main columns pushed forward to the Alai plateau through wild and rugged regions, where the paths in places zigzagged along high mountainous ledges, and where numerous frail, trembling bridges suspended over gigantic chasms and precipices had to be crossed in single file. The troops, however, reached the Alai with the loss of only a few pack animals which had fallen over the precipices. Abdulla Bek's mother and wives were shortly afterwards captured, with large flocks of sheep and many horses, and this was followed by the submission of the elders of the Kara-Kirghiz tribes who wander about the Alai plateau. But Abdulla Bek remained at large and escaped towards Kashgar.

During this expedition the Russians had no fighting; but the scientific and geographical results achieved were of considerable importance. The Alai plateau (that is, the elevated valley between the Alai and Trans-Alai ranges, and through which the Kizil-Su, or Surkh-ab, branch of the Oxus flows) was traversed, and Prince Witgenstein's force was sent to the Kizil-Yart defile in the Trans-Alai range, from whence a grand view was obtained of the Pamir region generally, and particularly of the northern portion, called the Khargoshi Pamir,

in which lies the Great Kara-Kul Lake. This lake was carefully explored by Captain Kostenko, and found to be 13,200 feet above the sea level, and only 800 feet below the summit of the Kizil-Yart Pass. Its greatest length—from north to south—was found to be about fifteen miles, and its breadth eleven miles; and it is almost divided into two portions by promontories which jut out from its northern and southern shores, and between which there is a narrow strait connecting the eastern and western portions of the lake. After exploring this portion of the Khargoshi Pamir, Kostenko then proceeded in a south-easterly direction as far as the Uzbek Pass; but being without a guide, and falling short of provisions, he was then obliged to retrace his steps. By this reconnaissance the geographical knowledge of the mountainous regions to the south of Khokand was very largely extended, and the Russian frontier was pushed southwards for some eighty miles to the southern edge of the Khargoshi Pamir.

The Russian troops in the meanwhile traversed the camping-grounds of the Itch Kilik, Naiman, and Taiti tribes of the Kara-Kirghiz, and the expedition finally returned to Khokand early in September 1876, having satisfactorily proved that a Russian force of all arms could, during the summer months, cross the Alai and Trans-Alai ranges without serious difficulty. This knowledge was in itself of the very greatest importance, for the chief difficulty in the Pamir line of advance towards India is to be found not in the Pamir

plateau itself, but in the regions immediately to the north and south of it. Once the Russian troops had traversed the difficult defiles of the Alai, and had succeeded in reaching the crest of the Trans-Alai range, they found that the drop from thence to the Pamir plateau was a trifling matter of 800 feet,¹ and as soon, therefore, as the summit of the Kizil-Yart Pass was reached the most difficult portion of the journey was over. Once thus established on the northern edge of the 'Roof of the World,' there is nothing in the physical nature of the country to prevent an army of several thousand men, provided with mountain artillery, from continuing its advance, during the summer months, right up to the northern entrances of the Hindu Kush Passes, whence detachments could be pushed forwards into Chitral and Gilgit, thereby turning the right flank of the English line of defence, and spreading confusion and dismay throughout Kashmir and the frontier provinces of British India.

This is the lesson which the Russians partially learned from Skobelev's Alai expedition; and from this time they sedulously strove to perfect their knowledge of the Pamir region, in order that they might be able to make a startling diversion in that direction when the time should arrive for the great final struggle for mastery in Asia.

¹ This is according to Captain Kostenko's observations. In the latest maps of the Pamir region, published by the Royal Geographical Society, the difference between the Kizil-Yart Pass and Lake Kara-Kul is 14,280 - 12,800 = 1,480 feet.

CHAPTER XIII

1877—1878

RUSSIAN INTRIGUE AT KABUL

Russian conquests in twelve years—Russo-Turkish War—Constantinople in peril—Russian successes in the Asiatic provinces of Turkey—British Fleet passes the Dardanelles—The Treaty of San Stefano—England on the verge of war—Agents from Russia in Kabul—A Russian agent sent to India—Preparations for Russian invasion of India.

SINCE the annexation of Khokand and of the northern portion of the Pamir plateau, Russia has made no further conquests in the countries to the east and north of the River Oxus. There indeed remained but little territory in that portion of Central Asia which she could have appropriated without becoming embroiled in a war with China; for by the time General Skobelev had returned to Khokand after his Alai expedition the towns of Urumchi and Manas had been recaptured by Chinese troops, and before the close of the following year Yakoob Beg had ceased to live, and Eastern Turkestan had become a province of the Chinese Empire.

The Russians, however, had no cause to be dissatisfied with the result of their work. In twelve short years from the time when Verevkin and Tcherniaeff made their simultaneous advance

against the northern towns of Khokand, Russia had succeeded in conquering the three Khanates of Khokand, Khiva, and Bokhara. Khokand had been completely absorbed into the Russian Empire; large slices of territory had been wrested from Khiva and Bokhara and added to the Czar's dominions, and the rulers of those states, though nominally independent, had been reduced to a condition of complete subjection; and, in addition to these great achievements, Russian troops were firmly established on the eastern shores of the Caspian Sea, and had penetrated for some distance into the Akhal Tekké oasis on the northern frontier of Persia.

But, while the Czar's troops in Central Asia had been thus advancing from victory to victory, dark storm-clouds were gathering in Turkey, and before the summer of 1876 had passed the troubled condition of the Christian provinces of the Ottoman Empire had become so serious as to endanger the peace of Europe. Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Montenegro were in revolt against the Porte. Bulgaria became the scene of a series of atrocious massacres perpetrated by the Christian and Moslem inhabitants against each other. On June 22 the Prince of Servia declared war against the Turks, and ten days later the Servians crossed the frontier at three different points. The Serbs, however, in spite of Russian assistance in officers, men, and *matériel*,¹ were no match for the Turks, and, after

· One of the Servian columns was under the command of General Tcherniaieff, the conqueror of Tashkent. About 500 Russian officers and 600 non-commissioned officers took service with the

some fighting, were forced to abandon their positions on the Morava, when Alexinatz fell into the hands of their enemies. At this moment, when there was nothing to prevent the Turks from marching to Belgrade, Russia stepped in, and General Ignatieff—the Russian Ambassador at Constantinople—informed the Porte that if within two days it did not accept an armistice of six weeks or two months' duration, and did not at once arrest military operations, diplomatic relations between Russia and the Sublime Porte would be broken off.

At this time, when war between Russia and Turkey appeared imminent, the Czar, on November 2, 1876, at an interview at Livadia with Lord Loftus, the British Ambassador, 'pledged his sacred word of honour in the most earnest and solemn manner that he had no intention of acquiring Constantinople; and that if necessity should oblige him to occupy a portion of Bulgaria, it would only be provisionally, and until peace and the safety of the Christian population were secured.' 'Intentions,' he said, 'are attributed to Russia of a future conquest of India and of the possession of Constantinople. Can anything be more absurd? With regard to the former, it is a perfect impossibility; and as regards the latter, I repeat again the most solemn assurances that I entertain neither the wish nor the intention.' Such were the words of the Czar Alexander II. of Russia, and yet, as is

Serbs; thousands of Russian volunteers and 1,800 Cossacks passed through Roumania on their way to join the Servian army, and batteries of artillery, mitrailleurs, rifles, and ammunition were sent from Russia to assist in the rebellion against the Ottoman Empire.

now well known, many months had not elapsed before the occupation of Constantinople by a Russian army was only prevented by the action of Great Britain; and Russian columns actually marched towards the frontiers of India, if not for its conquest, at all events for the purpose of shaking the position of the British in that country.

Eleven days after this meeting at Livadia orders were issued for the immediate mobilisation of a portion of the Russian army; and although a conference of the representatives of the Powers was held at Constantinople in the following December and January, no satisfactory settlement was arrived at, and, after some further futile correspondence, the Czar, on April 24, 1877, issued a manifesto in which he informed his 'faithful and beloved subjects' that his 'desire to ameliorate and assure the lot of the oppressed Christian populations of Turkey' had forced him to have recourse to arms, and therefore, invoking the blessing of God upon his 'valiant armies,' he gave the order to cross the Turkish frontier. Thus Russia once again waged war against the Porte, and for a brief space there was a pause in her attacks against the outposts of the Indian Empire.

Before daybreak on the very day on which war was declared, Lieutenant-General Skobeleff, the hero of so many daring exploits in Central Asia, pushed forward with the Cossack cavalry across the Russian frontier, and, after a ride of nearly sixty-five miles, seized the bridge over the river Sereth at Barboschi at nine o'clock the same even-

ing. Three days later a Russian corps had occupied Galatz and Braila on the left bank of the Danube, and the Russian army of invasion began to advance through Roumania; before the end of June the Russians had crossed the river Danube at two points; and by the middle of July Nicopoli had been captured, the Dobrudja was at the mercy of the invading armies, a large Turkish force was hemmed in in the Quadrilateral, and Gurko, after crossing the Balkans by the Hankoi Pass, had made a raid on Yeni Sagra, scoured up the Tundja Valley, and had recrossed the mountains by the Schipka Pass.

But an unpleasant surprise was in store for the Russians. Flushed with their easy triumphs, they became over-confident, despised the military capabilities of their enemies, and neglected the most obvious precautions for securing the safety of their armies in Bulgaria. Although the existence of a large Turkish force in the neighbourhood of Wid-din was known to the Russian headquarter staff, no steps were taken to guard against a possible attack from that quarter; and when a force was eventually sent to occupy Plevna, after the capture of Nicopoli, it arrived too late. What follows is almost too well known to need relating. After three unsuccessful attempts to capture the Turkish position, in which the Russians lost 601 officers and 27,397 men, it became manifest that it would be necessary for them to remain on the defensive in all parts of the theatre of war until Plevna had been captured.

But as soon as Plevna had fallen, the Russian armies once more continued their march towards the south; the Turkish positions in the Etropol Balkans were turned, Suleiman Pasha's army was defeated and dispersed among the Rhodope mountains, the city of Adrianople was occupied by a Russian army, and on January 31, 1878, an armistice was concluded, on the understanding that the Turks were to cede Kars and Erzeroum to the Russians, to recognise the independence of Roumania, Servia, and Bulgaria, and to evacuate the fortifications of Buyuk-Tchekmedje, which constituted their last line of defence. Constantinople was thus at the mercy of the Czar's victorious troops, and all Europe waited in a state of intense anxiety to see whether the British Cabinet would adopt any measures to avert a Russian occupation.

While these events were taking place in the European portion of the Sultan's dominions, the Asiatic provinces of Turkey were also being invaded by the armies of the Czar. On April 24, 1877, while Skobeleff was hastening to seize the bridge across the Sereth river, four strong Russian columns crossed the frontiers of Armenia and moved forward against the Turkish fortresses of Kars, Ardahan, Batoum, and Bayazid. Moukhtar Pasha, fearing lest he might be shut up in Kars, fell back, with a small force of 5,000 men, to the Soghanli Dag, and there awaited the arrival of reinforcements. Bayazid was occupied by the Erivan troops, under General Tergoukassoff, on April 30, and seventeen days later Ardahan was

carried by assault after a brief bombardment. Thus within the short space of three weeks two of the most important frontier towns in Armenia had been captured, and defeat and ruin stared the Turks in the face.

But just as the brilliant defence of Plevna stemmed the tide of Russian invasion in Bulgaria, so in Armenia the whole military situation was suddenly changed by the clever strategy of Moukhtar Pasha, and by the natural genius for field fortification which the Turks seem to possess. As soon as Moukhtar heard of the fall of Ardahan he fell back from the Soghanli Dag, and occupied a position stretching from Olti on the north to the Delibaba Pass on the south, where he guarded the approaches to Erzeroum from Ardahan, Kars, and Bayazid. Here the Turks remained unmolested for a whole month, and during that time they received considerable reinforcements, and threw up formidable lines of field-works at Zewin, which lies midway between Olti and the Delibaba Pass.

In the meanwhile Tergoukassoff had been pushing forward from Bayazid, and on June 16 he routed a Turkish force which attempted to oppose his march. He, however, failed to seize the passes of Delibaba, through which the Turks had retreated; and as it was reported that the Russians showed no signs of advancing from the direction of Kars, Moukhtar Pasha resolved to strike a crushing blow against Tergoukassoff before he could receive reinforcements. He accordingly concentrated a considerable portion of his force

on his right wing, and, after seizing the Delibaba Pass, he, on June 25, assaulted the Russian position at Tahirkeui. The battle raged for ten hours with varying success; but at nightfall the Russians still maintained their positions, and the Turks were obliged to fall back to their positions of the morning—exhausted, short of ammunition, and believing that the action had not been a success.

But while this indecisive engagement was being fought on the Turkish right, a more important battle was taking place at Zewin. General Loris Melikoff, the Russian commander-in-chief,¹ had heard of the movement of Turkish troops towards Delibaba, and he rightly assumed that Moukhtar Pasha intended to attack Tergoukassoff. As there was no time to reinforce the Erivan column directly, or to oppose Moukhtar's movement, Melikoff decided to attack the Turkish position at Zewin. Misled probably by the remarkable collapse of the Turkish defence at Ardahan, he believed that Turkish troops could not possibly withstand the attacks of the Caucasus infantry; and, with but little artillery preparation, he gave the order for a frontal attack on the Turkish entrenchments. Such recklessness could only have one result. As soon as the assaulting columns emerged from their shelter behind a low ridge which existed in front of the position they

¹ The Russian forces in Asia Minor were nominally under the supreme command of the Grand Duke Michael, but General Loris Melikoff was practically commander-in-chief.

were received with a murderous fire, and although the brave Russian infantry returned again and again to the attack, the task which they had been called upon to perform was quite beyond their powers, and by nine o'clock in the evening Melikoff's army was retreating in confusion towards the frontier.

This disaster rendered it necessary for Tergoukassoff to abandon his isolated position, and he therefore fell back during the night. The whole Russian army hurriedly retired to its frontiers, Bayazid was evacuated, the siege of Kars abandoned, and nothing except Ardahan and a strip of territory in front of it remained in the hands of the Czar's troops. Zewin has well been called the 'Plevna of Armenia' for this battle brought about a collapse of Russian strategy in Armenia which was no less remarkable than the paralysis which followed Osman Pasha's victories at Plevna.

But the parallel between the European and Asiatic campaigns does not end here. Just as the Turkish commanders in Europe threw away their opportunity by neglecting to undertake combined aggressive movements after the Turkish victories at Plevna, so did Moukhtar Pasha fail to reap the full advantage of his success. It is true that he had but little cavalry, and that such as he had was bad; but nevertheless he must be blamed for not having followed up his victory by a pursuit of the retreating Russians, and for not having assumed a bold offensive, whereby he might have carried the war into his enemies' territory and have thus delayed,

even if he could not have entirely prevented, their subsequent advance. Instead of doing this he contented himself with slowly advancing to the neighbourhood of Kars, and there took up a position on the Aladja Dag, some fifteen miles to the east of that city.

Nor was this his only fault; for after his victory at Zewin he committed a series of mistakes which completely neutralised the effects of his previous sound strategy. The Russian army halted in a position facing the Turks, and there awaited the reinforcements which were being rapidly pushed to the front. At first all went well; but on the night of October 8, snow having already fallen, Moukhtar appears to have imagined that the campaign was over, and he fatuously abandoned his strong advanced positions and concentrated his force on the Aladja Dag and on the neighbouring heights of Vizinkoi and Avliar. This was the Russians' opportunity. What did these hardy Northmen care for snow? As a matter of fact, winter is the season most favourable for their military operations, for their troops, who are inured to all the rigours of frost and snow, have then a considerable advantage over the less hardy nations of the south. On the night which followed Moukhtar's abandonment of his advanced positions, Lieutenant-General Lazareff moved from the Russian camp with 15,000 infantry, 22 squadrons of cavalry, and 70 guns, and commenced a flank march which was intended to bring him in rear of the Turkish position.

The movement was well conceived and bril-

liantly carried out. As Lazareff advanced, a line of field-telegraph was unwound, and he thus remained in constant communication with the Russian headquarters. The Turks remained in ignorance of this turning movement until Lazareff, on the 14th, reached the village of Bazardjik, some miles in rear of Moukhtar's position. Here some 6,000 Turks barred the way; but they were soon driven back, and by that evening Lazareff had established himself in rear of the left flank of the Turks. A message was then sent along the wire to the Grand Duke Michael, who at once issued orders for a general attack. At daybreak on October 15 the battle began, and from the very first the Turks had no chance. The right wing of their army was caught in a trap and forced to capitulate, and Moukhtar Pasha, with the remnants of the left and centre, was driven in dire confusion to Kars.

This was the decisive battle of the war in Armenia. Kars was again invested, and, after a short bombardment, was carried by assault on the night of November 17; Moukhtar's army was once more defeated on the Deve Boyun heights; and Erzeroum was closely besieged until February 22, 1878, when, in consequence of the terms of the armistice which had been concluded at Adrianople, the gates of the city were opened, and the capital of Armenia was occupied by Russian troops.

The Turks had thus been once more defeated and humiliated by Russia. All their fortresses in Armenia were in the hands of their enemies, and

a Russian army was encamped within a short distance of the Golden Horn. But at this juncture, when a Russian occupation of Constantinople appeared imminent, the British fleet, under Admiral Hornby, passed through the Dardanelles and anchored off Princes' Islands at the western entrance to the Bosphorus. This movement was followed by the Russian occupation of the village of San Stefano, and, as the Turks delayed to sign the treaty of peace which was demanded by the Russians, it seemed as if the war between the two enemies was about to be renewed, with England acting in alliance with the Turks for the defence of Constantinople. But after a fortnight of anxious suspense the Turks came to terms, and on March 3 concluded the Treaty of San Stefano, which brought the war to an end.

The relations between England and Russia, however, became daily more strained. The British Cabinet insisted that the Treaty of San Stefano should be laid before the great Powers of Europe in congress, who should determine how each article separately, or in conjunction with the others, affected the previous treaties of 1856 and 1871. Russia objected, and both nations prepared for war. A credit for 6,000,000*l.* was demanded by the Beaconsfield Ministry in order to be prepared for extreme measures if no agreement could be arrived at; the reserves were called out on April 1, and seventeen days later it became known that two regiments of cavalry, two batteries of artillery, four companies of sappers and miners,

and six regiments of native infantry had been ordered to Malta from India.

The Russians also were not idle. They were startled at the despatch of Indian troops to the Mediterranean, and decided to make a demonstration against India in order that the English might be fully occupied in the defence of their Eastern empire, and that their action in Europe might be thus hampered and weakened; a body of Baltic seamen were quietly embarked in a hired steamer at a harbour on the Esthonian coast and conveyed to America, where vessels were bought and converted into cruisers to ruin the British commerce in the Atlantic; and while the naval and military authorities in Russia made preparations for the expected outbreak of hostilities, a committee was formed in Moscow and subscription lists were opened in every town of the Empire for the purpose of forming a volunteer privateer fleet which was to prey upon the vast mercantile marine of England.

It is only necessary here to refer to the Russian demonstration against India, which is an important episode in Central Asian history.

In the spring of 1869 the Russian Chancellor declared that Afghanistan was 'completely outside the sphere within which Russia may be called upon to exercise her influence,' and in the following November he informed Sir A. Buchanan that 'he saw no objection whatever to English officers visiting Kabul, though he agreed with Lord Mayo that Russian agents should not do so.'

Yet, in spite of these assurances, General Kauf-

mann in 1870 sent Russian agents to Kabul with letters to Shere Ali, the Amir of Afghanistan. This correspondence between Tashkent and the Afghan capital was continued in a desultory manner until the year 1874, when it began to assume a more important aspect, for in the spring of that year General Kolpakoffsky, in Kaufmann's absence, wrote a letter to Shere Ali which was very significant in tone, references being made therein to 'devotion' on the side of the Amir and 'grace' on the part of the Czar. After this there was a brief pause in the correspondence; but in the following year fresh letters were sent to the Amir, and from that time they became more frequent and more significant in tone, Kaufmann even going so far as to propose to Shere Ali that he should sign a treaty of commerce, and also enter into an offensive and defensive alliance with the Russian Government; and, in spite of the categorical denial of Prince Gortchakoff, the correspondence was continued, and after two years more of secret negotiations it became evident to the Indian Government that Kaufmann had succeeded in turning Shere Ali from his alliance with the English.

When it was decided, at a conference in the Russian camp before Constantinople, that a demonstration should be made against India, Major-General Stolietoff was ordered to proceed to Kabul to prepare the way for the advance of a Russian army towards India. This Russian ambassador left Tashkent at the end of May 1878, and, after

a halt at Samarkand, set out for Kabul on July 14, accompanied by six officers, twenty-two Cossacks, fifteen Kirghiz horsemen, and four servants. The mission proceeded through Guzar, and, traversing the famous defile known as the 'Iron Gates,' reached the Oxus at Chushka-Ghuzar after a march of five days. There the Russians were detained for some days owing to the refusal of the Afghan commandant to permit them to cross the river until orders had been received from Kabul. The necessary permission was, however, eventually received, and the embassy reached Kabul on August 10,¹ where it was received with every honour. On the following day Stolietoff, with the officers of his staff, paid a ceremonial visit to Shere Ali, and, after the usual formalities, presented two letters to the Amir—one from the Czar and the other from General Kaufmann.

During the envoy's stay in Kabul he reviewed the Afghan troops and had many private interviews with the Amir, during which he pressed Shere Ali to agree to the following proposals on the part of the Russian Government:—

(1) That the Amir should permit the location of Russian agents at Kabul and at other places in his territory where it might be deemed necessary

¹ The Russian accounts agree in the statement that Stolietoff left Samarkand on July 14 (new style), and reached Kabul on August 10. These dates do not, however, agree with the English accounts, which give July 22 as the date of the ambassador's arrival at the Afghan capital. The English accounts also state that the first formal interview with Shere Ali was held on July 26, and that the review of the Kabul garrison (22 battalions) was held on August 2.

to locate such agents of Russian nationality, and that these agents should be vested with the powers of Consuls.

(2) That permission be accorded for the location of Russian troops at four convenient points on the frontiers of Afghanistan, and that the Amir should engage to protect such garrisons.

(3) That the Russian Government should be permitted to construct roads from Samarkand to Kabul *viâ* Katti Kurghan, Khojah Sale, and Balkh; to Herat '*viâ* the course of the Hamun River (Oxus), the Plain of Andkhui, Bala Murghab, Maruchak, Pandi (Panjdeh),¹ and Firoz Koh;' and also from Herat to Kandahar 'by the Garmsir route.'

(4) That when necessary the Kabul Government would permit the passage of Russian troops proceeding to India by such routes as might be considered desirable.

(5) That telegraph wires might be set up between Samarkand, Katti Kurgan, Balkh, Kabul, Kandahar, and other places where the Russian troops or agents were stationed.

(6) That when necessary Russian troops should be supplied with provisions and transport on payment of reasonable prices.

(7) That if it became desirable that the Russian Government should send an expedition to wage war in India, the Amir should furnish supplies

¹ Thus, in 1878, the Russians in their dealings with Shere Ali acknowledged that Pandi (or Panjdeh) was in Afghan territory. This point appears to have been forgotten a few years later.

to the Russian troops on payment, and that the Afghan Government should establish agents at the capital of Russia and in Tashkent, &c.

In return for these concessions the Russians promised :—

(1) To guarantee the continuance of the country of Afghanistan to the representatives, successors, and heirs of the Amir in perpetuity, in accordance with the will of the last sovereign and legal rights.

(2) In no way to interfere in the internal affairs of Afghanistan, or in the administration of the country.

(3) Always to afford assistance for the maintenance of peace in Afghanistan, and against the external or internal enemies of the principality.

(4) To consider the enemies of the Amir as their enemies.

It will be thus seen that Stolietoff's mission to Kabul was the result of seven years of intrigue which had been secretly carried on by Kaufmann's agents at the Afghan capital. The ground had been most carefully prepared beforehand, and when the time arrived for Russia to show her hand she was able to do so with considerable effect. Stolietoff marched into Kabul unopposed, was there received as an honoured guest, and persuaded the foolish Amir to enter into an offensive and defensive alliance with Russia for the express purpose of making a joint attack on India.

Nor was this the only step taken by the Russian Government for the purpose of weakening the

British position in Hindostan. While Stolietoff was hastening towards Kabul at the head of his imposing embassy, another Russian agent, named Pashino, was sent to India for the purpose of sowing the seeds of rebellion in that country as much as possible; after which he was to have gone on to Kabul to help Stolietoff with the considerable knowledge of Afghan politics which he had acquired during the two years which he had spent in Samarkand as interpreter to Abdur Rahman Khan. This emissary—if his own statement is to be believed—was despatched to India at the instigation of General Skobeleff, and he actually succeeded in reaching Peshawar before his progress was arrested. There, however, he was stopped by the English frontier officials, and, although a considerable outcry was raised at the seizure of a ‘private traveller,’ he was quietly sent down country and deported to Russia.

In the meanwhile Kaufmann was busily employed in the preparation of an army for the invasion of India if the Afghans could be persuaded to join in the attempt; or for the occupation of Kabul if Shere Ali refused to take up arms against the English.

CHAPTER XIV

1878

PROJECTED INVASION OF INDIA

Skobeleff's scheme of invasion—Adoption of some of Skobeleff's suggestions—Berlin Conference—British envoy stopped at the Afghan frontier—British invasion of Afghanistan—Russia's mistake—Fate of Shere Ali—Treaty of peace—Apologists for Russia—Assurances of M. de Giers—Colonel Grodekoff's ride to Herat.

THE Russian scheme for the invasion of India from Turkestan was no new idea, and was merely the outcome of Russia's previous advances in Central Asia; but there is no doubt that one of the most prominent supporters of this movement was an officer who was at that time in the Russian camp before Constantinople. This officer was Skobeleff, and his opinions unquestionably carried great weight at the conference which was held near Constantinople to determine what steps should be taken by Russia in view of the probable outbreak of war with England. This brilliant general, in January 1877, while in command of the Ferghana district, prepared a remarkable scheme for such an invasion of India in case the troubles in Turkey should lead to a war with England.

This project, which was afterwards found among the papers of Prince Tcherkasski, was published at length in the Russian 'Monthly Historical Review' for December 1883. The following are extracts from Skobelev's scheme :—

'I am convinced that we need not anticipate any serious rising on the part of the natives of Turkestan in the event of a war with Turkey. Therefore if we wage war with the Turks alone, and if the idea of the aggressive attitude which would determine the value of Turkestan in the event of a war with England has not yet been matured at headquarters, it would be unbearable to remain here during the war.

'One of the objects of this letter is to remind you of my recent independent command on service ; but its main purport is to candidly inform you of my opinion that it is advisable, as it is practicable, to send an expedition from Turkestan in case of war with England in order to increase the triumph and prestige of Russia.

'The object I here indicate is of world-wide importance. No Russian patriot, recognising the practicability of the scheme and placed by fate in a position to carry it out, could hesitate to call attention to the vast resources which, I will permit myself to say, our Government has accidentally accumulated on this frontier, and by which—with resolution and due preparation—it is possible not only to strike a telling blow at the British in India, but also to crush her in Europe. All this, I repeat, can be effected so long as we retain full possession

of Turkestan and render it a secure base of operations. In this I firmly believe, and have ample proofs of our power and influence so long as—in Asia more than anywhere else—we act up to the maxim, “Waste no words where you may exercise authority.”

‘Firmly resolved to do my duty in a most critical time for Russia, I submitted a memorandum on December 27, 1876, to the Governor-General, and I also wrote to my uncle Alexander. I now address you without fear of the consequences to myself, and praying God that attention in the proper quarter may be given to that great aggressive force which we possess in Central Asia. . . .

‘It has often been said that Russia can threaten British rule in India from Central Asia, and that it is therefore absolutely necessary that England should now check Russian advances in Turkestan.

‘If we keep our eyes open we shall see that our position in Turkestan is indeed formidable, and that the fears of the English are not without foundation. We have established a strong base of operations in Central Asia, with an army of some 40,000 men, from which we can always detach a force of at least 10,000 or 12,000 men for operations beyond the frontiers of the province; at the same time we can implicitly trust the fidelity of our subjects, as even now there is not the least sign of any combination of the Mahommedans of Turkey with those of Central Asia.

‘By reinforcing the army in Turkestan with, say, six companies from Western Siberia, with as

many Siberian Cossacks as could be spared, with one battery, and with three regiments of Cossacks from Orenburg, we could organise a column of some 14,000 or 15,000 men.

‘Such a force thrown across the Hindu-Kush could do a great deal.

‘Everyone who has studied the question has said that the position of the English in India is very precarious. It has been said that the English hold India by the sword alone, that the number of British troops in India is only sufficient to maintain order in the country, and that the native army is untrustworthy.

‘Everyone in referring to the subject of a Russian invasion of India has stated that an approach to the frontier would be sufficient to kindle a rebellion.

‘It may be said that an enterprise against the English in India would be full of risk—that it might end disastrously for the Russian force. I do think, and we must not shut our eyes to the fact, that the undertaking would indeed be a risky one. We must, however, remember that, if we were successful, we should completely destroy the British Empire in Hindustan, and the effect of this in England cannot be calculated beforehand. Competent English authorities admit that a disaster on the frontiers of India might even produce a social revolution in England, because for the past twenty years England has been tied more closely than ever to her Indian possessions by causes and phenomena, including an incapacity

for war, identical with those observed in France. In short, the overthrow of British supremacy in Hindustan would be the commencement of the downfall of England.

‘Should our enterprise not result in complete success, that is, if a rebellion should not break out in India, and if we should fail to cross the frontier, we should nevertheless compel the British to keep the whole of their Indian army in Hindustan, and make it impossible for them to utilise any portion of it in Europe. They would, in fact, be compelled to transfer some of their troops from Europe to India. We could, in short, to a great extent, paralyse the land forces of England, either in a European war, or in the choice of a new line of operations from the Persian Gulf through Tabriz to Tiflis in conjunction with Turkish and Persian armies—an idea which has been entertained by British officers ever since the Crimean War.

‘The necessity that Turkestan should take a part in forthcoming events is rendered all the more imperative by the fact that, in the event of an unfavourable termination of the war, we should most assuredly be obliged to evacuate Turkestan, or to curtail our authority in that region. But even if we should be defeated both in Europe and in Asia we should have proved by our disastrous undertaking the formidable nature of our position in Central Asia; and if necessity should compel us to conclude a humiliating treaty, Russia might escape with the loss of Turkestan, which would then have risen in value.

‘There can be no comparison between the risk we run in making a demonstration against British India, and the enormous advantages which we should gain in the event of the success of such an enterprise.

‘The great difference in the results of success to us and to our enemies is of itself sufficient to urge us boldly forward.

‘As soon as war with England was declared we should immediately commence in Turkestan by the despatch of a mission to Kabul and the formation of a column in Samarkand (which for effect should be called an army), composed of ten battalions, fourteen sotnias, and forty guns, giving a total of 10,000 to 12,000 men. This should be the lowest possible strength of our aggressive force.

‘The object of the mission would be to draw Shere Ali into an alliance with us, and to open up communication with the disaffected natives of India; and the army should be pushed through Bamian to Kabul to secure the success of these negotiations. If it be found that Shere Ali still adheres to the English (which is not very likely, as he did not accept the invitation to be present among the other feudatories on the occasion of the proclamation of the title of Empress of India at Delhi, and he even expressed his annoyance at having received the invitation), a claimant to the throne should be put forward in the person of Abdur Rahman Khan, who is living at Samarkand, by which means internal dissensions might be brought about in Afghanistan, while, on the other

side, Persia might be conveniently persuaded to renew her claims to Herat. By turning Persia's attention to Afghanistan, we should divert her military forces from the Caucasus. The advance of Persian troops to Herat would call into requisition all the supplies and transport in the country, and this would effectually paralyse any English scheme for an advance from the Persian Gulf to Tiflis.

‘As soon as the invading force had left Samarkand, another should be formed there, consisting of two battalions of infantry and sixteen sotnias of Cossacks, with a battery of artillery, for the occupation of places along our lines of communication and for general service in our rear.

‘Without going into details, I would divide the campaign into two phases. The first should be one of extremely rapid action, of diplomatic negotiations with Afghanistan, supported by the advance of the column to Kabul. The second, commencing with the occupation of Kabul, should be a waiting period, during which we should keep up communication with the disaffected elements in Hindustan, giving the means of expressing themselves in the way which would best promote our interests (the chief cause of the failure of the Mutiny in 1857 was a want of organisation on the part of the mutineers); and, finally, as also chiefly, to organise hordes of Asiatic horsemen, who, to a cry of blood and plunder, might be launched against India as the vanguard, thus reviving the days of Timur.

‘The subsequent operations of the Russian column cannot be traced in this plan of campaign.

At best the operations might end in the presence of the Russian banners at Benares; at the worst, the column would retire with honour to Herat, meeting a force sent from the Caucasus, which should consist of several battalions, with six guns to every thousand men. An Asiatic force, especially of Turkomans, is not formidable in the open, and even the invincible British army would melt away very considerably in advancing to Herat. The English, moreover, are not in a position to move more than 25,000 men beyond the frontiers of India, and a large proportion of these would have to be posted along the lines of communication. At the same time, it must not be forgotten that the Turkestan province is on the flank of the enemy's lines of communication, and that we would grow stronger as we approached the Caspian.

‘I have already stated that this undertaking would be a risky one; but it would be justified by the greatness of its object, and by the stupendous results which might be achieved. From the standpoint of these results there can be for Russia no talk of risk, and as for Turkestan, it is not worth mentioning.

‘We should expect from the troops who should be so fortunate as to be selected for this campaign something more than self-sacrifice, in the highest sense of the word, as it is understood by military men. On crossing the Hindu-Kush, the column should, in my opinion, be so managed that every man might feel that he had come to Afghanistan

to conquer or to die ; that each man might understand that the Czar required even his death. We could not be reproached for leaving our colours in the enemy's hands if not a single Russian soldier remained alive beyond the Hindu-Kush.

‘Such a sentiment and such a resolve can, in my opinion, be only based on the feeling which is commonly cherished by every soldier in the army, of an unfaltering and boundless love and devotion for his sovereign. The difficulty of so raising the spirit of the force in accordance with the nature of the undertaking could be overcome by attaching one of the Emperor's sons, who, at the proper time, might tell the troops what was expected of them by their Czar and country. I am well assured that this force, in the presence of one of his Majesty's sons, would do wonders, and would never disgrace the Russian name. . . .

‘Asiatic tribes might give us trouble, but they cannot prevent the accomplishment of our purpose. We have arrived at the stage at which, with judicious and systematic actions, with artillery and ammunition in excess of the proportions required in European warfare, we can strike with effect in the open field and in the mountains. I repeat that we can do this without any loss, being well versed in military operations. In short, with our present experience, with our splendid and, in my opinion, sufficiently numerous troops, and with our resources, there is nothing in Asia capable of thwarting the widest strategical design which we might conceive.

‘Our policy during the last ten years has raised the importance of Russia in the world. The English, as also the people of Asia, are of opinion that there are no limits to the great enterprises of our Government. On this belief the safety of our position mainly rests. I was much impressed by a remark made by Colonel Cory, in his “Shadows of Coming Events; or the Eastern Menace,” that he could not imagine a power in Turkestan otherwise than in connection with Russia by a direct line of rail between Charjui, on the Oxus, and Moscow. Asiatics at the present moment believe that Russians spit fire when they charge with a cheer.

‘A knowledge of this province and of its resources naturally leads to the conclusion that our presence in Turkestan, in pursuit of Russian interests, is only justifiable if we strive to solve the Eastern Question in our own favour from this quarter; otherwise the hide is not worth the tanning, and all the money expended in Turkestan is lost. We must be careful lest we, by our inaction in Asia during a crisis in the West, prove to our enemies the aimlessness of our annexations. This would undoubtedly cause a loss of prestige, and would entail in the future a still larger unprofitable expenditure. I repeat that, with a minimum force of 40,000 men well handled, we might not only control the whole of Turkestan, Kashgar, and Bokhara combined in arms against us, but we could even—and I say it boldly—evacuate Turkestan and reconquer it. . . .

‘We have, no doubt, much to go through in the future in Central Asia. But the present generation of Mahommedans, born under the ægis of the law of Russia, has first to grow to manhood. Before then an entire class of influential natives will spring up who know us well, and who understand the secret of our power and of our success. The notorious Nana Sahib was educated among Europeans, and was received in the best English society, and it was only for this reason that he became such a terror to the English. As yet we have no such spirits in our midst, and in this circumstance lies one of our chief advantages over the English. When political affairs in the West are approaching a crisis, this important consideration, combined with many others, should urge us to derive as much benefit from Turkestan as that province is capable of yielding.

“In Asia, when triumphs cease, difficulties commence.”

‘This is undoubtedly true. In a political sense we are now living in a time of triumphs. Let us take advantage of it.

‘You see how much I expect from our power in Central Asia. Having for a considerable time shared the hardships of active service with the Turkestan troops, I have no desire to exchange service here for any other elsewhere. I could not, however, remain inactive here while the majority of our army was shedding its blood in the country’s cause in the West. This is why I beg you again to remember me in case war is declared.

‘MICHAEL SKOBELEFF.’

‘P.S. . . . I have just received the “Golos” of December 29, 1876, and I see from the leading article in it that “a declaration of war by Russia against the Ottoman Porte is the wish of our enemies,” that “Europe has complicated the question and relies on Russia’s impatience,” and, further, that “the circumstances are such that a complete and speedy solution of the question is perfectly impossible.”

‘To us, who understand our military resources in Asia, the Eastern Question, of which the solution should only be fearful to the enemies of Russia, appears in a different light.

‘So long ago as in the third decade of the present century, General Field-Marshal Count Moltke dwelt on the impossibility of achieving rapid results in European Turkey, and considered that it would be most difficult to carry on a war in that country without the assistance of a powerful fleet and complete command of the Black Sea. Field-Marshal Prince Varshafski, in 1829, gave it as his opinion that aggressive operations in Asia would be of little use, as there was no great and decisive object of attack, though he considered the trade routes between Baghdad and Scutari to be the best objectives in this case. The construction of the Suez Canal has, however, deprived even this line of its importance.

‘It might, therefore, be positively asserted that however successful we might be in a campaign in European and in Asiatic Turkey, we should still search in vain for a solution of the Eastern Ques-

tion. Sincere conduct on the part of England in accordance with the interests of our Government might, so far as I understand the subject, indeed satisfy our legitimate demands. I therefore think that we should not have any doubts as to the question of a war with England. Without a formal declaration of war England might still be at war with us through the despatch of officers to Turkey and by assisting Turkey with supplies.

‘Would it not be best to avail ourselves of our strong strategical position in Central Asia, and of our better knowledge of the communications and resources of Central Asia, so as to strike a crushing blow against our real foes, if proofs of our determination to operate against their weakest point were insufficient to make them yield.

‘The state of affairs is apparently serious; therefore, while resolving to maintain a defensive attitude on the Danube and in Asiatic Turkey, we could do what we want by landing 30,000 men at Astrabad for a march to Kabul in conjunction with the Turkestan troops. In this way we should deliver the Russian army in Europe and in Asia Minor from the difficulties against which it fights from time to time without success—on several occasions in the course of every century.

‘It is not for me to say how we should defend the Caucasus against a Turkish invasion, nor how long the army of the Danube should remain strictly on the defensive in the midst of the helpless Christian population of Turkey; but it is my firm belief that :

‘(1) If the invasion of India by a corps of 18,000 men is, under the present conditions of the extent of British supremacy in Hindustan, possible and desirable, though attended with risk, an invasion by an army of 50,000 men is absolutely free from all risk.

‘(2) From the commencement of spring we have on the Caspian the means to rapidly concentrate a force of 30,000 men at Astrabad completely equipped.

‘(3) A large force can easily march from Astrabad to Herat and Kabul. By bringing political pressure to bear on Persia we might get all our supplies from Khorassan.

‘(4) The Turkestan military district, reinforced with six regiments of Siberian Cossacks, three regiments of Orenburg Cossacks, six companies of infantry, and one battery of artillery from Western Siberia (which troops could reach Tashkent by the spring), could send a force of 18,000 men with artillery to Kabul.

‘(5) The troops can be marched from Samarkand to the Hindu-Kush, and can be marched from Khulm through Heibak, Kuram, and Bamian, and across the Kara Kotal, Dandan Shikan, Ak Robat, Kalu, Haji Kak, and Unai Passes into the valley of the Kabul Daria. Although artillery has been taken over the above-mentioned passes without special appliances, I have still given my attention to this subject in order to facilitate the passage of the guns. I am now able to state that we have an easy way of transporting guns; yester-

day a four-pounder was slung under a newly-designed cart, and a trial with it was successfully made. We can only give an opinion on the merits of this method of transport after practical experience in February next, when a trial is to be made with two guns over the snow-clad mountains in this district.

‘(6) Shere Ali, Dost Mahommed’s successor, must necessarily contemplate the recovery of Peshawar, and it is not difficult to raise all Asia against India by a cry of “blood and plunder.”

‘(7) Shere Ali is at present dissatisfied with the English.

‘(8) There are scarcely more than 60,000 British troops in India at the present time with a corresponding force of artillery, and the native army is rather a menace than a support to the rulers of Hindustan.

‘(9) The very appearance of even a small force on the frontiers of India is sufficient to kindle a rebellion, and to ensure the overthrow of the British dominion in Hindustan.

‘In my opinion all this should be taken into serious consideration at the present moment.

‘Khokand, January 27, 1877.’

Such was the remarkable scheme prepared by General Skobelev for the invasion of India from Central Asia in order that the English might be forced to abandon their opposition to Russia’s designs on Constantinople; and it will be shown that this scheme was closely adhered to at the time

when war between Great Britain and Russia became imminent after the conclusion of the treaty of San Stefano, and no better proof can therefore be given that Skobelev's scheme correctly represents the opinions which were then held by the Russian Government.

Skobelev suggested that a mission should be sent to Kabul 'to draw Shere Ali into an alliance with Russia,' and this part of the programme was carried out by the despatch of Colonel Stolietoff's embassy. Then, again, he recommended that if the Amir still adhered to the English alliance, Abdur Rahman Khan should be put forward as a claimant to the Afghan throne in order that 'internal dissensions might be brought about in Afghanistan.' Even this detail was attended to, for shortly before Stolietoff proceeded to Kabul, Abdur Rahman Khan—who was then living at Samarkand—was told to submit a petition to the Czar's Government, 'setting forth that he had been residing there (i.e. in Samarkand) under the protection of the Russian Government, for a long time; that he had often petitioned them to help him in securing the restitution of his ancestral territory from the Amir of Kabul, but his prayer had not been acceded to; that he had now heard that the Russians were preparing to fight against the British Government; that they had sent envoys to wait upon the Amir to request him to allow passage through his country to the Russians proceeding to India and returning therefrom should necessity for such a passage arise; and that, such being the case, he offered his services,

in case His Highness refuses to grant the request of the Russian Government, to capture Balkh with a small assistance from the Czar, and then to subdue the whole of Afghanistan, which is not a difficult task.' Thus did the Russian authorities actually take steps to carry out Skobelev's recommendation that Abdur Rahman Khan should be put forward as a claimant to the throne of Kabul in case Shere Ali was not found to be sufficiently pliant.

It has also been shown how a Russian agent was sent to India to commence the agitation which the Russians believed—and still believe—would cause the people of that country to rebel against the rulers who, for more than a century, have endeavoured to raise them out of the depths of ignorance in which they live, and who, by good government and the peaceful development of the resources of the country, have brought India to a condition of prosperity and contentment which has made the British rule in Hindustan to be a marvel to other nations and a glory to the British race; and it is only necessary now to show how Skobelev's proposals for the despatch of an expeditionary force towards the frontiers of India were adhered to, even in so far as the strength of the invading army was concerned.

On April 25, 1878, the Russian Minister of War issued an order for the organisation of three columns for the invasion of India from Central Asia; on the 15th of the following month another order was issued for the formation of eight battalions of infantry reserves for the reinforcement of

the Turkestan military district, and for the augmentation of the Bashkir cavalry; and on May 26 General Kaufmann published the following 'orders of the day':—

'In accordance with the orders of His Imperial Majesty conveyed to me by the Minister of War in his despatch of April $\frac{13}{25}$, Sub. No. 10, three active detachments are to be preliminarily formed out of the troops under my command; the head detachment at Samarkand, that of Ferghana at Margelan, and that of the Amu-Daria at Fort Petro-Alexandrovsk.

'The chief detachment, under the command of Major-General Trotzky, is to be composed of the 3rd, 5th, 6th, 9th, and compound Turkestan and 3rd West Siberian line battalions, and of two companies of the 17th Turkestan line battalion; of the whole Turkestan Rifle Brigade and Sapper Company; of the 4th Compound Orenburg-Ural Regiment of Cossacks; of four sotnias of the 2nd Orenburg, and of two sotnias of the 5th Compound Orenburg Regiment of Cossacks; of the 1st and 3rd battery, and half-battery of the 2nd battery of the 1st Turkestan Brigade of Artillery; of the mobile exercising battery; the 1st and 5th Orenburg H. batteries, and one rocket battery.

'The Ferghana detachment, under the command of Major-General Abramoff, is to be composed of six companies of rifles, two sotnias of the 5th compound regiment of Cossacks, six pieces of the Turkestan mountain battery, and a division of a rocket battery.

‘The Amu-Daria detachment, under the command of Colonel Grotenhelm, is to be composed of six companies, two sotnias, and four guns, to be selected by the commander of the Amu-Daria district.

‘The first detachment is to be concentrated at Samarkand, and to march from thence *en échelons* to Jam, and further, according to instructions.

‘The second detachment is to be organised at Margelan, to march through Vadil to the Valley of the Kizil-Su, and further, according to instructions.

‘The third detachment is to be formed at Petro-Alexandrovsk, and to march along the Amu-Daria to Charjui, whence it will advance according to instructions.

‘The time of formation and advance of these detachments will be determined according to exigencies, and will be fixed by special supplementary orders.

‘(Signed) KAUFMANN.’

The principal column, which was intended for the advance on Kabul, consisted of some 12,000 men of all arms, with 44 guns and a rocket battery; Abramoff's corps, which was to occupy Badakshan and Wakhan, and to make a diversion in the mountainous districts round Chitral, was 1,700 strong; and Grotenhelm's detachment, which also consisted of some 1,700 men, was to have operated against Merv and the Herat district. Thus the whole army of invasion consisted of

some 15,500 men, with 54 guns and a couple of rocket batteries—not a very formidable force, it is true, but one which, with Afghan assistance, might have caused much annoyance to the English in India.¹ The Russians believed with Skobeleff that, if they pushed forward even a small force to Kabul, and there waited until their agents had stirred up a rising in India, the whole of Hindustan would soon be in a blaze of rebellion against the English, and that they would then be able without difficulty to occupy the country with the assistance of the Afghans and hordes of Asiatic horsemen.

While these columns were being organised, M. Weinburg visited Bokhara and obtained the Amir's promise that he would assist the Russians in every possible way; Colonel Maieff was sent forward to explore the country and routes between Samarkand and the Amu-Daria; and Colonel Matvaeff was also sent to Balkh and Badakshan to prepare the way for the advance of Abramoff's column.

The first échelon of the main column commenced its march from Tashkent on June 13, and after a march of nineteen days, reached the village of Jam on the Russo-Bokharan frontier. The other detachments followed shortly afterwards,

¹ In addition to these three columns operating from Turkestan, another force under Colonel Lomakin set out from the shores of the Caspian Sea for the purpose of operating in the Turkoman country on the northern frontiers of Persia. This expedition, which will be briefly described in the following chapter, was, however, a miserable failure.

and the whole of Trotsky's force was concentrated at Jam and Sarikul,¹ where orders were received that no further advance was to be made until the result of the Berlin Conference was known. There the troops were attacked by dysentery and typhus, while cases of sunstroke were of daily occurrence ; soldiers' funerals were to be witnessed every day, and during the short halt in camp on the Bokharan frontier the Russians lost on an average two men per day from sickness alone.

Grotenhelm's detachment had, if possible, a more trying experience. Leaving Petro-Alexandrovsk on July 27, the force proceeded along the right bank of the Amu-Daria over heated sandy plains, encountering violent storms of wind which raised great clouds of sand, and with the temperature at 42° Réaumur. The drifting sand proved the greatest obstacle to the movement of the troops, the soldiers and horses sinking deep into the friable sand at every step, while the wheels of the gun-carriages sank almost to the axle-trees, which rendered it extremely difficult for the tired horses to make any progress whatever. But in spite of these difficulties the men pushed cheerfully forward, in the belief that they would easily be able to march to India, and there gain a share of the spoil which they were told was awaiting them in the rich cities of Lahore and Dehli.

But their hopes of gaining wealth at the expense of the rich merchants and native princes of India were soon dissipated, for, when they reached

¹ This is a village near Jam on the Russo-Bokharan frontier.

Kizil-Robat, news was received that the famous Berlin Congress had concluded its work, and that the representatives of the Great Powers had signed a treaty¹ whereby peace was secured, and which necessitated the abandonment by Russia of any immediate attack on the British possessions in Hindustan. The detachment therefore retraced its steps, and by August 30 the last troops of the main column had also returned to their cantonments, and the projected invasion of India thus came to an end.

But although the Russians arrested the advance of their troops, they had succeeded in raising a storm on the frontiers of India which led to a bitter war between the English and Afghans; for, as soon as it became known that Shere Ali had received the Russian embassy at Kabul, and had publicly discarded the friendship of the English for the sake of a Russian alliance, the British Government decided that a British mission should be sent to the Afghan capital to counteract the dangerous influence which Stolietoff was seeking to establish over the Amir. On August 14, 1878, Lord Lytton therefore wrote a letter to Shere Ali, in which he announced his intention to send a mission to Kabul under Sir Neville Chamberlain, and asked that it might receive safe conduct through Afghan

¹ By this treaty Russia obtained the territories of Ardahan, Kars, and Batoum in Asia Minor; but was obliged to relinquish the valley of Alaschkerd and the town of Bayazid, which had been ceded to her by Article 19 of the Treaty of San Stefano. The town and territory of Khotour, which had long been in dispute between Turkey and Persia, were also ceded to the Persians.

territory and be properly received; and again, on the 23rd of the same month, he wrote a second friendly letter offering his condolences on the death of the Amir's son and heir. These letters, however, remained unanswered. The mission reached Janrud on September 21; but when Major Cavagnari rode forward with a small escort to Ali Musjid to demand permission for its advance through the Khyber Pass, Faiz Mahommed Khan, the Afghan governor of the fort, stated that he had received orders to oppose its passage by force of arms, and that, but for his personal friendship for Cavagnari, he would have at once opened fire on him and his party.

What followed can be told in a few words. An ultimatum was sent to the Amir, demanding an apology for the affront which had been given to the British Government, insisting on the reception of a permanent British mission in Kabul, and claiming reparation for injuries which had been inflicted on the Afridi tribesman who had attended the British envoys into the Khyber Pass. Shere Ali was informed that unless a satisfactory reply were received by November 20, he would be treated as a declared enemy of the Indian Government, and war would inevitably ensue. In the meanwhile the military authorities were not idle. Troops were pushed forward towards Peshawar, Thal, and Quetta, and preparations were made for an immediate advance from those three points, if the Amir adhered to his hostile attitude.

But November 20 came and passed without any

reply from Shere Ali, and telegraphic orders were therefore sent to the various military commanders to cross the Afghan frontier. Sir Samuel Browne, who commanded the Peshawar field force, left Jamrud at daybreak on the 21st, and attacked the enemy's position at Ali Musjid, when a sharp fight took place, the position being abandoned by the Afghans during the following night. Dakka was then occupied without resistance, and on December 20 Major-General Maude's division entered Jalalabad. While the Peshawar column was thus successfully advancing through the Khyber, the Kuram Valley field force, under Major-General Roberts (now Lord Roberts of Kandahar and Waterford) on December 2 defeated an Afghan army which had taken up a strong position at the Peiwar Kotal, and then General Roberts pushed reconnaissances as far as the Shutar Gardan Pass, which was the last mountain defile which barred his way to Kabul. In the South, also, the Kandahar field force, under Lieutenant-General D. M. Stewart, pushing forward across the Khoja Amran range, reached the village of Kushab (some seven miles south of Kandahar) on January 7, 1879, and as Stewart there learnt that the Governor and garrison of the southern capital of Afghanistan had abandoned their charge and fled towards Herat, he took possession of the city on the following day.

While the British forces were thus rapidly advancing into the heart of Afghanistan, the miserable ruler of that Principality gradually began to perceive that in allying himself with Russia he

had espoused the cause of a treacherous people, and had placed his trust in a nation which is perfidious in its dealings with its powerful neighbours, and is therefore not likely to keep its promises when the betrayal of a weak ally would enable it to escape from a false and dangerous position. On account of the conclusion of the Treaty of Berlin, Colonel Stolietoff left Kabul on August 24; but even then, when the entire withdrawal of the mission and disavowal by Russia of any further interference in Afghan affairs might have saved Shere Ali from the disastrous consequences of his folly, and have averted the invasion of Afghanistan by British troops—even then, Colonel Rosgonoff and four other officers remained in the Afghan capital with their Cossack escort, and the Amir was still led to believe that Russia would help him against the English. Thus, during the critical period which preceded the outbreak of the Afghan War, the greater part of the Russian embassy still remained in Kabul, and Shere Ali was supported by Russian advice in his mad policy of defying England; and then, when the country was invaded from three points, and it was manifest that nothing could prevent the rapidly advancing British forces from seizing the capital, the remainder of the mission was withdrawn, and Shere Ali in his hour of trouble was forced to fly with them towards the north.

It is impossible to understand what Russia expected to gain by this action. Had the Czar's Government determined at all hazards to support

Shere Ali and to assist him against the English, their policy, however risky, could be appreciated ; but by thus embroiling that ruler in a war with England, and then leaving him to his fate, the Russians committed a mistake such as they had never before committed in the whole course of their Central Asian policy. Their action was nothing less than a gross betrayal of an ally, and the history of Stolietoff's mission will long be remembered in Afghanistan to the discredit of Russia and as a lasting proof of the treachery and faithlessness of the Government of the Great White Czar.

On December 1 Shere Ali, on receiving news of the fall of Ali Musjid, sent his family to Mazar-i-Sherif in Afghan Turkestan, and twelve days later he himself left Kabul and started northwards, accompanied by the Russian embassy. He intended to go to Tashkent, and, if possible, to St. Petersburg to lay his case before the Czar, but on reaching Mazar-i-Sherif he broke down, and there died on February 21, 1879, an outcast from his people, and betrayed by the great nation which had used him for her own ends, and then cast him aside when he was no longer useful. The wretched fate of Shere Ali will long be remembered in Afghanistan, and the day will inevitably come when Russia will have cause to regret that, in pursuit of her own ambitious designs, she once proved to the Afghan people the worthlessness of Russian promises.

Shortly before Shere Ali fled from Kabul, he

released his son, Yakoob Khan, from the confinement in which he had for many years been kept, and appointed him to act in his name. For several weeks the Indian Government knew nothing as to the intentions of this 'Regent,' and as there were rumours that he intended to continue the war, the operations of the three invading armies were carried on. While the Peshawar and Kuram columns were occupied in subjugating the tribes in the neighbourhood of the Khyber Pass and Kuram Valley, General Stewart advanced northwards from Kandahar and occupied Kalat-i-Ghilzai, while General Biddulph marched westwards to Girishk on the river Helmund.

But in February Yakoob Khan at length made overtures for peace, and after some interchange of letters he eventually announced his intention of proceeding to Gandamak for the purpose of entering into a conference for the settlement of the terms of peace. He arrived there on May 8, 1879, and was received with the greatest honour and hospitality, and on the 26th of that month he signed in the British camp a treaty of peace, by which it was agreed that in return for British support against foreign aggression and an annual subsidy of six lakhs of rupees the Amir would conduct his relations with other States in accordance with the advice of the Indian Government, and would permit a British resident, accompanied by a suitable escort, to reside in Kabul, while other British agents could also be sent to the northern frontiers of Afghanistan on special occa-

sions. It was also stipulated that the Kuram, Pishin, and Sibi Valleys should be assigned to the British Government, the Amir receiving the surplus revenue after payment of the expenses of administration; and the British authorities were also to have complete control over the Khyber and Michni Passes, as well as over the independent frontier tribes in whose territory those passes are situated. Telegraphic communication was to be established between Kabul and India via the Kuram Valley, and a separate agreement regarding commercial facilities was concluded for a period of twelve months.

On the conclusion of this treaty the two northern divisions were at once withdrawn within the limits of the new frontier, but it was arranged that the evacuation of Kandahar should be delayed until the following autumn, in order that the troops might be saved from the sickness and hardships to which they would have been exposed if they had been forced to march through the Bolan Pass during the great heat of the summer months.

Thus ended the Afghan War of 1878. Shere Ali, driven from his throne, had fallen a victim to Russian intrigue and treachery; the diplomatic mission which had been sent to Kabul by the Russian Government in the hope that the British power in India might be shaken, had been a complete failure, and Russia had been discredited in the eyes of all the peoples of Central Asia; and the English, by their victorious campaign in

Afghanistan, had secured a better frontier on the north-west, and had overthrown the Russo-Afghan alliance.

Before leaving this subject it is necessary to refer briefly to an argument which has been freely made use of by certain people in England, who invariably try to find some excuse for Russia's actions in Central Asia, even if such actions are notoriously unscrupulous and devoid of any real justification. These persons, in their anxiety to defend Russia, do not even hesitate to disparage the actions of the British and Indian authorities, and at times have given cause for the unpleasant suspicion that Russian roubles can buy the support of men who profess to be true British subjects. When Stolietoff's mission was sent to Kabul, and during the summer months of 1878 when war and peace were hanging in the balance, there were many such apologists of Russia, who strove to inculcate the doctrine that the Czar's Government were perfectly justified in doing what they did, with a view to the imminent outbreak of hostilities between England and Russia.

It is not the intention here to discuss whether the Russian Government under such circumstances were justified in violating the agreement of 1873 and the solemn assurances which were given in 1869, and repeated time after time since then—that 'Afghanistan was completely outside the sphere within which Russia may be called upon to exercise her influence,' and that 'Russian agents should not visit Kabul.' On this point opinions

may differ, although it is possible that Englishmen might unanimously object to a French occupation of Belgium in the event of a crisis arising in the relations between France and Germany. But, whatever doubts there may be on this point, it is clear that as soon as the Treaty of Berlin had been signed the Russian mission should have been at once withdrawn from Kabul; and as these friends of Russia have carefully avoided all reference to the continuance of Russian officers and Cossacks in the Afghan capital for five months after the conclusion of the Treaty of Berlin, it may be interesting to mention a few facts which will display the absurdity of their arguments, and which should prove to unbiassed minds that, although the Russian Government in the first instance sent Stolietoff's mission to Kabul on account of the probability of war with Great Britain, they, even after all danger of war had been removed, continued in their violation of their previous solemn promises of complete non-intervention in Afghan affairs, and strove to improve their position in Central Asia at the expense of their good name.

On July 2, 1878, Lord Loftus had an interview with M. de Giers at St. Petersburg, when the British ambassador inquired whether any Russian envoy had been ordered, either by the Imperial Government or by the Turkestan authorities, to proceed to Kabul. To this question—although Colonel Stolietoff had left Tashkent for Kabul some six weeks previously—M. de Giers replied, ‘*That*

no mission had been, or was intended to be, sent to Kabul, either by the Imperial Government or by General Kaufmann.' In spite of this denial, however, the truth could not long be suppressed, for circumstantial accounts of the progress of the mission shortly afterwards appeared in the Russian newspapers; and then, when the true state of affairs could no longer be concealed, on August 14—a month after the signature of the Treaty of Berlin—M. de Giers informed the British Chargé d'Affaires that 'orders had been given to arrest all the columns which had been put in motion from Tashkent,' and he also stated without any hesitation that 'everything has been stopped; the political as well as the military precautions which we thought ourselves justified in taking against you—everything has been stopped.'

Such were the words of M. de Giers, the present Foreign Minister of the Russian Empire; and can it be wondered at if the British Government believed in the assurance thus given? Could anything have been clearer or more precise? It was not said that *orders had been issued* for the cessation of all the political and military precautions which had been taken by the Russian Government and Central Asian authorities with a view to the probable outbreak of hostilities between England and Russia. Had M. de Giers so worded his reply, it might have been possible for Russia and her apologists to have thrown the blame for what followed upon the shoulders of the Governor-General of Turkestan. But no such excuse can be given; for

the words used permitted of only one interpretation. The Russian senator said: 'Everything *has been stopped*—the political as well as the military precautions.' Thus it can well be believed that Lord Salisbury was astonished when Count Schouvaloff, in the course of conversation on December 10 following (four months afterwards), casually remarked that 'although the Russian envoy who had been sent to Afghanistan had been recalled to Russia, the Russian mission still remained at Kabul.'

It is doubtful whether any episode in the whole history of Russia's dealings in Central Asia more clearly establishes the truth of Prince Dolgorukoff's words, that in Russia 'slavish subjection and arbitrary force reign from top to bottom; and throughout there is developed, in formidable proportions, the official lie—the lie erected into a political institution.'¹ Before the signature of the Treaty of Berlin, and long after Stolietoff had started from Tashkent, the British Government were told that no such mission had been or was intended to be sent to Kabul; then, a month after the conclusion of the Berlin Congress, they were informed that all political as well as military precautions had been stopped, and they were thus led to believe that the Russian mission to Kabul had been withdrawn; and then, four months after this last declaration, it was casually remarked by Count Schouvaloff to Lord Salisbury that, although Stolietoff had returned to Tashkent, the Russian

¹ See *La Vérité sur la Russie*, by Prince Peter Dolgorukoff.

embassy still remained in Kabul in spite of the repeated assurances that Russia would not interfere in Afghan affairs. Who but a paid Russian agent can be found to attempt any justification of the prolonged stay of the Russian mission in the Afghan capital after the signature of the Treaty of Berlin? And can anyone, even in the pay of Russia, be found who will be bold enough to say anything in defence of the misleading statement which was made to Mr. Plunkett on August 14, 1878, by M. de Giers?

Russia, in violation of her previous promises, retained the Russian embassy in Kabul for five months after the conclusion of the Treaty of Berlin. Nor was this all. When that treaty had been concluded, and after the troops for the projected invasion of India had returned to their cantonments, Colonel Grodekoff, the chief of the staff of the proposed invading army, left Samarkand with General Kaufmann's permission on October 9, 1878, and, travelling in his uniform as a Russian staff officer, crossed the River Oxus nine days later, and, passing through Mazar-i-Sherif, Siripul, and Maimana with an escort of Afghan troopers, made his way to Herat, where he received a warm reception from the Afghan governor and inhabitants. There he remained for three days, during which period he was permitted to examine the city and to make a thorough survey of its fortifications; and then he leisurely continued his journey to Meshed, and thence to Astrabad. This officer, on his return to Russia, was not greeted with the official rebukes

which have been accorded to many British officers who have undertaken similar journeys in their desire to advance British interests in the East ; but he received an order of knighthood, was cordially received by the Emperor, given an appointment in the General Staff Office, and is now Military Governor of the Syr Daria district in Turkestan, where he is awaiting a further opportunity of gaining distinction when the time comes for another Russian move towards the frontiers of India.¹

Thus it will be seen that Russia's movements in Central Asia in 1878 cannot be attributed solely to the necessity for precautionary measures with a view to the outbreak of hostilities with Great Britain, which was then imminent. The Czar's Government seized the opportunity to make another step forward in the direction of India. But the bold policy of the Beaconsfield ministry proved that they had been premature in their attempt to establish themselves in Afghanistan ; and although their miserable and deserted ally, Shere Ali, justly paid the penalty for his defiance of the British Government, it must always remain a disputed point whether Russia should not also have been called to account for her wanton violation of her promises, and for her open support of an enemy of the Indian Government.

¹ Since this was written Grodekoff has been transferred from the Syr Daria District.

CHAPTER XV

1877-1879

UNSUCCESSFUL CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE TEKKÉS

Russia's 'mission' in Asia—Lomakin's expedition—Retreat and disaster—Loss of Russian prestige—General Lazareff's expedition against the Tekkés—Lazareff's death—Lomakin takes the command—Mismanagement and incompetency—Thirsting for a 'glorious victory'—The 'Colossus of May' and the 'pigmy' of September—A brave defence—The slaughter at Denghil Tepé—Retreat—Lomakin's last chance lost.

SKOBELLEFF, in his famous project for the invasion of India, suggested that while the columns from Turkestan were advancing across the Hindu-Kush Mountains, another force, consisting of 'several battalions, with 6 guns to every 1,000 men,' should be despatched from the Caucasus, to operate in the Turkoman country on the northern borders of Persia; and this recommendation was not lost sight of by the Czar's Government when they resolved, in 1878, to make a demonstration against India. But although the Turkoman expedition of 1878 was timed so that the Caucasus troops, by their advance into the Akhal country, could keep the Tekkés in check, and thus in a measure protect the right flank of the Turkestan columns, this campaign must be considered in connection with

the great design which for many years formed a portion of Russia's policy in Central Asia, and which had for its object the subjugation of the whole of Turkomania and the absorption of all the remaining territory to the south of the Oxus which was not included within the recognised limits of Persia and Afghanistan. The Russians had, from the time of their first permanent occupation of Krasnovodsk, been most persevering in their efforts to get a footing in the Akhal country; and, while they annexed little or no territory to the east and north of the Oxus since the conquest of Khokand, there was no peace in Turkomania until Skobeleff crushed the Tekkés at Denghil Tepé, and till Merv itself had become a Russian garrison town.

It is therefore necessary to again revert to the consideration of the actions of the Russian officials in the Trans-Caspian Military district, and to review briefly the operations of the various expeditionary forces which were from time to time sent against the Tekké Turkomans.

In the whole history of the Russian advance from Europe towards the borders of Hindustan there is no phase which is more worthy of careful consideration than the Russian operations which resulted in the conquest of the Turkomans of Akhal and Merv, and which ended in the establishment of Russian garrisons within easy striking distance of Herat, the 'Key of India.' For this movement clearly demonstrates the unceasing perseverance and determination which the Russians

display in their endeavours to extend their Empire in Asia, and the manner in which they adhere to a certain fixed line of policy in spite of repeated checks and disasters; it is full of examples of the manner in which they violate their pledges when, by so doing, some territorial advantages can be gained; it displays the subtlety with which they gain the submission of hostile tribes and obtain possession of important strategical centres by means of carefully-conducted intrigues, and by the employment of so-called 'traders' as diplomatic agents; it affords a lesson as to the manner in which they carry out their 'civilising mission' in Asia by the remorseless butchery of innocent women and children; and it also shows how the English people, in their intense anxiety to avoid the horrors of a great war, actually permitted the Russians to appropriate a portion of Afghanistan, and allowed them to take up positions from which they will be able to occupy the fertile valley of Herat before a single regiment can be moved west of Kandahar.

Before describing these events it is necessary to mention that on April 5, 1875, Prince Gortchakoff informed the British Government that 'His Imperial Majesty has no intention of extending the frontiers of Russia, such as they exist at present in Central Asia, either on the side of Bokhara or *on the side of Krasnonodsk and of the Atrek.*' This declaration was made at a time when no particular anxiety was displayed in England on account of Russian movements in Central Asia, and it was

therefore accepted as a proof of the Czar's sincere desire to abstain from further acts which might create suspicion or alarm in the minds of the English. Such assurances, however, have frequently been but the preface of renewed aggression; and in the following pages it will be shown how this promise was broken, and how the Emperor *did* extend his frontiers beyond Krasnovodsk.

As has been already related, General Lomakin in the autumn of 1875 marched along the banks of the Atrek, and, after visiting several encampments of the Yomud Turkomans, advanced as far as Chat at the confluence of the Atrek and Sumbar rivers. Shortly after he had returned from this reconnaissance the Tekkés of Akhal warned the other tribes of Turkomans who inhabited the country between Kizil-Arvat and the Caspian Sea that they would be exterminated if they entered into friendly relations with the Russians; and therefore in the autumn of 1876 a Russian detachment was once more sent to Kizil-Arvat, where it was intended that a permanent garrison should be established, ostensibly for the protection of the tribes which were friendly towards the Russians, but in reality for the purpose of extending Russian influence over the Akhal Tekkés themselves. This expedition, however, was not a success; for the Tekkés assembled in force, and made such persistent attacks on the Russian column that the commander was forced to return; and after he had reached Krasnovodsk the Tekkés pillaged the settlements of the tribes which favoured Russian rule.

Lomakin, therefore, on February 16, 1877, issued a proclamation to the elders and chiefs of the Yomud Turkomans, declaring his intention of advancing against the Tekkés to punish them for their attacks on the tribes which dwelt in Russian territory; announcing his determination to construct a fort at Kizil-Arvat, and to retain a permanent garrison at that place; and calling upon them to supply 1,000 camels for transport purposes.

Thus, while the Chancellor of the Russian Empire was declaring that there was no intention of extending the Czar's dominions from the direction of Krasnovodsk, the Governor of the Trans-Caspian Military district was loudly proclaiming his intention of marching against a neighbouring tribe, and of establishing a permanent military garrison in one of their chief settlements. Such is the manner in which Russia has operated in Central Asia for the last thirty years, or, more correctly, throughout the whole course of her Asiatic history. While the Central Government have been preaching peace, the frontier officials have been waging war; and meanwhile the Czar's Empire has been steadily expanding, and all the petty States in the heart of Asia have been swallowed up to satisfy the Muscovites' insatiable lust after territorial aggrandisement.

Early in the following April Lomakin left Krasnovodsk with a large force, and carried out his intention of occupying Kizil-Arvat. Noor Verdi Khan, the leading Akhal chieftain, then assembled a large force of Tekkés, and on May 24,

with some 6,000 men, delivered a determined attack against the Russian detachment; but the nomads, in spite of their bravery, could not stand before the fire of the Russian artillery and breech-loaders, and, after a fight which lasted about four hours, they were driven back in hopeless confusion, after some 800 or 900 men had been killed, wounded, or taken prisoners. But, although they had been thus severely defeated, the Tekkés had no intention of abandoning the struggle. They shortly afterwards re-appeared in greater force, and after besieging Lomakin in his camp, finally compelled him to bury his guns in the sand and retire in disorder to Krasnovodsk, when the Turkomans hotly pursued the retreating Russians, and even blockaded Krasnovodsk for several weeks.

This reverse occurred just at the time when the prestige of the Russian nation had been greatly weakened through Osman Pasha's victories at Plevna, and on account of the precipitate retreat of the Russian armies in Asia Minor after the battles of Haliyas (Tahir Keui) and Zewin. No troops could be then spared to reinforce the garrisons on the eastern shores of the Caspian, and the Russians for several months were obliged to maintain a strictly defensive attitude, and to rest content with the bare occupation of their fortified posts on the sea coast. But before the close of the year all danger had passed away. The Turkomans, finding that they were unable to drive the Russians into the sea, returned to their

homes; and when Kars had been captured, and the tide of victory had once more set in in favour of the Russians, Lomakin was summoned to Tiflis to receive the Grand Duke's orders regarding a fresh campaign against the Akhal Tekké, which was intended to obliterate all traces of the previous Russian defeats, and to permanently establish Muscovite influence throughout the western portion of the Tekké country.

In accordance with the instructions which were then issued, the greater portion of the Krasnovodsk garrison was removed to Chikishliar in the early spring of 1878, and additional troops were also sent to that place from the Caucasus; then, as the clouds on the political horizon gradually became blacker and more threatening, the Trans-Caspian forces were still further reinforced; and, finally, when the Russian Government resolved to commence a hostile movement, towards the frontiers of India, the small expeditionary column which had originally been intended for the occupation of Kizil-Arvat, and for the prevention of raids by the Tekké Turkomans, became transformed into a considerable force, which was to act as circumstances might require in connection with Kaufmann's invading columns. Krasnovodsk and Chikishliar were soon crowded with troops of all arms, and by the end of July everything was ready for the projected invasion of Turkomania by a Russian force of some 6,000 men and 24 guns.

Early on the morning of August 3 the camp at Chikishliar was struck, and the column commenced

its march, screened by strong bodies of Cossacks, Kirghiz, and Turkoman militia. Karaji Batyr was reached at ten o'clock on the following morning, and there twenty-seven wells, containing excellent water, were found at the foot of a number of hillocks which rise out of the surrounding tract of friable sand. Having taken in a good supply of water the column left this camping-ground on the next day, and, after a march of ten miles, arrived at the post of Baiat Haji, on the banks of the Atrek. There the troops remained for a week, and then continued their advance along the right bank of the river, past Yagli Olum and Bairam Olum to Chat, which is situated at the junction of the Atrek and Sumbar rivers.

The Russians remained at Chat for over a week, during which time General Lomakin made a reconnaissance along the upper valley of the Atrek to ascertain if it would not be possible to reach Askabad, and to penetrate to the eastern limits of the Turkoman country without being obliged to fight his way along the plains to the north of the Kuren Dagħ range. It would have been a matter of the greatest advantage to the Russians if an easy route could have been found along the Atrek Valley, for they could then have struck a sudden blow at the very heart of the Tekké settlements without being exposed to lengthy and harassing operations against the Turkomans, who, though excellent horsemen and brave fighters in the plains, are perfectly unfitted for mountain warfare.

But although Lomakin found that the country was eminently suited for military operations so far as forage and water were concerned, it was soon seen that an advance could not be made in that direction unless several months were first spent in road-making. For a distance of about thirty-three miles beyond Chat no difficulties were encountered by the reconnoitring party; but at a place called Su-Sium they came across two enormous rocks, which rose abruptly out of the bed of the river, and sharply defined the change which there took place in the geological formation of the country. According to a correspondent of the 'Moscow Gazette,' who was apparently attached to Lomakin's staff, the Atrek, which below Chat was of a dirty green colour, 'here became clear, the bed stony, and the banks covered with rich vegetation; the grass here grows up to one's waist, and whole copses of oak dot the surface of the country. Wild grapes also grow in abundance, and pheasants are also numerous.' But although the country was pleasant to look upon, and appeared to be a perfect paradise to the Russian soldiers, who had just crossed the sandy desert and saline marshes which lie between Chikishliar and Chat, it was found quite unsuitable for the passage of an army; for at Su-Sium the road became impassable for camels, and seven miles further on it became difficult even for horses.

Lomakin, however, still pushed forward, in hopes of finding a less difficult country farther on, and it was not until he had marched 72 miles beyond

Su-Sium—that is, to a point 105 miles above Chat—that he eventually determined to abandon the Atrek line of advance, and to march northwards towards Kizil-Arvat. Retracing his steps, he then marched down the river to a place called Alun Yak (14 miles from Chat), and thence marched across the Sugun Dagħ range, which rises to a height of 2,000 feet above the sea level, and forms a mountainous wedge between the Atrek and Sumbar rivers. The main column had in the meanwhile moved along the banks of the Sumbar to Khar Olum, and was there joined by the reconnoitring party, and, after a night's halt, the whole force advanced past Sharol Dau to Bek Tepè, a prominent ridge—one of the spurs which run out from the Kuren Dagħ range into the country between the Sumbar and Chandir streams.

From this point it was necessary that the movement should be conducted with the greatest caution, for the route to the Akhal country passed through a series of long and dangerous defiles, which are 'severally known under the names of Dairon, Nishik Sund, Turugai, and Kuvmius,' and which 'present most dangerous places for caravans,' as 'the road winds through them along steep ascents and descents; and only two horses can proceed abreast at one time along it.' Lomakin, however, successfully carried his column through these passes, and on September 2 encamped at Khoja Kala, which is described by the correspondent of the 'Moscow Gazette' to be 'an old deserted earth-work in the shape of a regular quadrangle, flanked

by two conical crenelated towers about fourteen feet in height, the upper platforms of which are protected by a low wall pierced with apertures for musketry fire.' Two miles to the south of this there is another similar fort of smaller dimensions, and with one flanking tower, standing in the centre of cultivated and well-watered fields, the water being obtained from a small rivulet which flows through the neighbouring bushes and reeds and ultimately reaches Khoja Kala.

From Khoja Kala detachments were sent out in all directions: Kizil-Arvat was visited, and reconnaissances were pushed forward towards Bami and Beurma; while other parties visited Bendesen, and from neighbouring mountains obtained good views of the Akhal oasis, and were able to examine the Tekké forts of Bami, Beurma, and Kara Kala.

But Lomakin's position was at this time one of considerable difficulty: his supplies had run short, and the neighbouring Turkomans of Kara Kala and Tarsakan refused to comply with the Russian requisitions; the force suffered greatly from sickness and disease; and large bands of hostile Tekkés soon appeared in the neighbourhood and obliged the Russians to withdraw their advanced parties, and to concentrate in the neighbourhood of Kara Kala. Even there Lomakin found that he could not possibly maintain his position, and he therefore informed the Tekkés that he would retire to the Caspian if they would permit him to hoist the Russian flag in their country and leave a garrison to protect it. The nomads, how-

ever, scornfully rejected this demand, and, gathering in thousands round the Russian camp, closely blockaded it for several days, and eventually forced Lomakin, on September 20, to commence a retirement towards the Caspian. The commencement of this retrograde step was the signal for more determined attacks on the part of the Turkomans, who harassed the column during its retreat through the defiles of the Kopet Dagħ, and continued their attacks until the demoralised Russian troops gained shelter behind the intrenchments at Chat. There a short halt was made, and then, leaving a garrison of 600 men at Chat, Lomakin continued his retreat towards the Caspian. But as soon as he had marched out of the fort the place was closely besieged by large masses of the Tekkés, and the main column was also chased past Baiat Haji and up to the very guns of Chikishliar, where the remnants of the Russian army arrived in a completely demoralised condition. Hundreds of soldiers died from disease alone during this unfortunate campaign, and many more were lost during the retreat; while the Turkomans carried off large numbers of camels from the immediate neighbourhood of Chikishliar. Throughout the following winter the small garrison at Chat were closely besieged in their intrenchments and cut off from all communication with the Caspian. The Tekkés repaired the fort of Khoja Kala, and for some time a large body of the nomads remained there in expectation of a renewed attack on their settlements; they made constant raids down the banks of the Atrek.

and even appeared before Chikishliar, on one occasion forcing the garrison to abandon the place and take refuge in their boats.

Thus ended this disastrous campaign against the Tekkés of Akhal. Russian prestige in Central Asia had indeed fallen to a very low ebb, and it is necessary to go back to Simonitch's attack on Herat and to Perovski's disastrous expedition against Khiva to find a parallel to the heavy blow which had been given to Russian dominion in Asia. From the borders of China on the east to Caspian on the west, it was known that the ambitious designs of the Great White Czar had been frustrated. The rendition of far-distant Kulja was claimed by the Emperor of China, who threatened to wage war if his demand were not complied with; Afghanistan was once more occupied by British troops, and Shere Ali, driven from his throne and deserted by his treacherous allies, was flying for safety towards Bokhara, accompanied by the members of the Russian mission who had offered so much but had done so little when the time arrived for the fulfilment of their pledges; the Russian columns which had been sent forward with so much ostentation, and which were to have carried the Russian banners to the gates of Dehli, had returned without even crossing the Oxus, and then stood fast in their cantonments, while the British armies drove the victim of Russian treachery from the throne of Afghanistan; the Russian army which had been sent to crush the Tekké Turkomans had been driven back in

disorder to its base; and, in addition to these many troubles, it was noised abroad throughout the Mahommedan states of Asia that the British Government had stepped forward to save Stamboul from a Muscovite occupation, and had forced the Russian armies to fall back when the defenceless city lay almost in their grasp.

But, although the campaign of 1878 against the Akhal Tekké Turkomans had been most disastrous, the Russians had no intention of submitting to the defeat without making an effort to regain their lost prestige. The very magnitude of the disaster, in fact, compelled them to at once take steps to break the power of the Tekkés; and when the result of Lomakin's last campaign became known, it was decided that General Lazareff¹ should be sent to take command of the army which was being assembled on the eastern shores of the Caspian for a fresh advance against the Turkomans. The newly-appointed commander-

¹ This was the officer who made the brilliant march round the right flank of Moukhtar Pasha's position on the Aladja-Dagh in the last Russo-Turkish war. He was born in 1819 at Sheesha in the Trans-Caucasian province of Elizabetpol, and saw a large amount of fighting during the operations against Schamyl, the famous Daghestan chief. He was a man of gigantic stature, and powerful in proportion to his size; he was full of energy, brave almost to recklessness, and invariably led his troops to the attack in the same manner as Skobeleff did; but he had a most violent temper, which at times broke out in perfect storms of passion. He had been twice wounded in action, and had been presented with the second and third classes of the Order of St. George, besides numerous other decorations; and at the close of the Russo-Turkish war was promoted to the rank of Adjutant-General, and made Commander of the Second Caucasian Army Corps.

in-chief set out from Baku early in April 1879, and, after a passage of forty-eight hours, landed at Chikishliar, where he was received with the usual salutes, and was welcomed at the pier-head by a body of friendly Turkomans, who presented bread and salt and sacrificed six sheep in token of their friendship towards the Russian general. He, during the day, liberated some Turkoman prisoners who had been seized by Lomakin as hostages for four Russian soldiers who had been captured by the Tekkés; and at daybreak on the following morning he set out for a rapid reconnaissance of the country between Chikishliar and Chat. Accompanied by an escort of two sotnias of Cossacks and eighty irregular horse, the general and his staff travelled at express speed in a couple of carriages past Karaji Batyr and Yagli Olum, and reached Chat at noon on the following day. There he remained for twenty-four hours to settle the details for the advance of the expedition; and after reviewing the garrison he returned post-haste to Chikishliar, and within an hour of his arrival on the coast he had embarked on the steamer 'Ural,' of the Caspian flotilla, and was steaming northwards towards Krasnovodsk to confer with Lomakin as to the conduct of the approaching campaign. From Krasnovodsk he returned to Tiflis to arrange for the despatch of troops and stores from the Caucasus ports to Chikishliar.

Owing to general mismanagement, as well as to the difficulty in obtaining camels, a con-

siderable delay occurred, and it was June 18 before the advanced guard, under the command of Prince Dolgoroukoff, set off from Chikishliar, and August 11 before the main body started.

The total strength of the force consisted of $16\frac{1}{4}$ battalions of infantry and sappers, 22 sotnias of cavalry, and 24 guns, giving a total of about 18,000 men of all arms. The advanced guard, passing through Chat, reached Duz Olum on June 29, where the troops at once commenced the construction of a bridge across the river.

The main body marched along the banks of the Atrek, *viâ* Bevoun Bashi, Gudri Olum, and Baiat Haji, to Chat, which was reached on August 18.

The main body of the expeditionary force did not remain long in this inhospitable region, but pushed on rapidly towards Khoja Kala. Duz Olum was reached by the infantry on August 21, and the cavalry brigade reached the same place on the following day. The advanced guard in the meanwhile had pushed forward towards the Akhal Oasis, and on August 20 Prince Dolgoroukoff encamped at Bendesen, sixteen miles to the east of Khoja Kala. On the following day he pushed across the passes with his cavalry and a company of infantry, seized the Tekké forts of Bami and Beurma, and, marching throughout the whole of the following night, surprised a Turkoman encampment at the Niaz wells at dawn on the 23rd, when, after a short engagement, some 300 of the nomads were killed or wounded, and 1,200 camels and 6,000 sheep were captured.

Just at this time, when the Russian troops were arriving on the borders of the Akhal country, a melancholy event occurred, which for a time threw a deep gloom over the whole force and overwhelmed all ranks of the army with grief and consternation. General Lazareff, who was greatly beloved by his soldiers, and who possessed in a remarkable degree the confidence of all ranks of his followers, was destined to be one of the first victims of the poisoned air and impure water-supply of the desolate encampment on the borders of the Caspian Sea, where the army had been forced to remain during the months of June and July. Shortly before the main column left Chikishliar he was attacked by a painful malady, and, in spite of an operation, it was found that his system had become so completely poisoned that nothing short of complete rest and careful treatment could possibly restore him to health. This, however, would have necessitated the relinquishment of his command—at all events, for a considerable time—and, as he could not bear the idea of abandoning the enterprise which he was about to commence, and which he believed he could successfully accomplish, he made up his mind to push forward so long as he had strength to move. A few days after the operation had been performed he commenced the trying journey to Chat; and, although the distance was traversed in an open *calèche*, he was so broken down with pain and sickness on his arrival at that desolate spot that the soldiers had to carry

him from the carriage to the commandant's tent. The strain proved too much even for his once powerful frame, and before the next day had dawned Ivan Davidovitch Lazareff, one of the bravest soldiers of the Czar, had passed away—a victim to his unflinching fortitude and constant adherence to duty.

After Lazareff's death the command devolved upon General Lomakin, who was the next senior officer with the force; and thus, by an extraordinary piece of good fortune, Lomakin found himself in a position to wipe out the memory of his previous defeats, and to re-establish his reputation as a military commander. He, however, failed to seize the opportunity, and the overwhelming disaster which soon befell the Russian army before the Tekké fortress of Denghil Tepé obliterated his last hopes of obtaining military distinction, wiped out the memories of his successful advance against Khiva, and caused his name to be mentioned in Russia with indignation and contempt. Lomakin, indeed, possessed but little talent for command. When he advanced towards Khiva from the Kinderlinsk Bay, in 1873, there were many brilliant officers attached to his column, who, by their energy and military attributes, ensured the success of that undertaking;¹ but since then, when these officers were employed in other parts of the Empire and he was left

¹ It is sufficient merely to mention the names of Skobeleff and Grodekoff to show that Lomakin was served in this campaign by some of the best officers in the Russian army.

to his own resources, he was almost uniformly unsuccessful in his military ventures.

Lazareff had intended to concentrate his force near to Khoja Kala, and there to halt until supplies for two months had been accumulated at an advanced base on the borders of the Akhal country, so that the army could be free to act against the most distant portions of the Tekké Oasis, and even penetrate to Merv itself if such a step were found to be necessary. But after his death this plan was abandoned; and on August 31, when the whole of the expeditionary force had arrived on the frontiers of the Akhal Oasis, a council of war was held, at which it was decided that a small column should cross the Kopet Dagh Mountains by the Kozlinski Pass, near Bami, and, by a rapid and unceasing forward movement, force the Tekkés to a general engagement, in which it was expected that they would be decisively defeated and subjugated once and for ever.

In accordance with this determination the advanced guard of the 'Akhal Tekké detachment' marched out of the camp at Bendesen at daybreak on September 3, and on the following morning the main body also commenced its march towards Bami. According to General Lomakin's report of the operations, the force which was employed in the actual invasion of the Akhal country consisted of 2,467 infantry, 850 cavalry, 271 artillery, and 202 militia, giving a grand total of 3,790 men, with 12 guns and 8 rocket-stands.

The rest of the army was left at various points on the road between Chikishliar and Bendesen to protect the line of communications, and, as Alikhanoff very truly remarked, ‘the Colossus of May had by September 9¹ become reduced to the dimensions of a veritable pigmy.’

The blunders which had been made at the commencement of the campaign soon bore fruit, and the Russians were about to reap a terrible harvest from the initial mistakes of the military officials and because of the incompetence of Lazareff’s successor.

Had Lomakin adhered to Lazareff’s original design the force would probably have been obliged to halt in the vicinity of Khoja Kala for some months, as—with the inadequate supply of transport animals—the large quantities of stores that were necessary could not possibly have been accumulated on the frontier before the close of the year. He was aware that he only held the command temporarily, by virtue of his superior rank, and that a new commander-in-chief would soon arrive on the scene, when he would lose his last chance of distinction; and as he was naturally anxious to wipe out his previous disgrace, it cannot be wondered at that he should have decided to try and snatch renown by making a sudden dash at the Tekké stronghold. In this decision he was, no doubt, supported by the advice of the ambitious Court-soldiers by whom he was surrounded; and as there was neither transport nor supplies for the

¹ The date of the battle of Denghil Tepé.

farther advance of the whole army, it thus happened that a weak brigade pushed forward from Bendesen to try conclusions with the brave people who had on so many previous occasions prevented the Russians from establishing themselves in the Akhal country.

Passing through Bami, Beurma, and Artchman, the advanced guard, under Prince Dolgoroukoff, reached the Tekké settlement of Durun on September 6, after a slight brush with some 300 Tekkés at a place called Begreden. The Turkomans, who were under the leadership of one of their most renowned chiefs, named Kara Batyr, had merely advanced from Denghil Tepé for the purpose of observing the movements of the Russian column, and as soon as the Cossacks pushed forward to meet them they hastily fell back and got away without any loss. The main column, under Count Borch, reached Durun on the following day, and on September 8 the whole force advanced as far as the small Tekké fort of Yaraji, which is thirteen miles to the west of Denghil Tepé, where it was well known that the Tekkés had resolved to make a stand.

No one in the Russian camp at that time knew how far the enemy's stronghold really was, and while some said it was only nine miles distant, others declared that it was three times as far. Exaggerated rumours also began to circulate as to the strength of the enemy, and it was reputed that fifty thousand armed men had been gathered together to dispute the further advance of the Russian column, and had solemnly vowed to con-

quer the infidels or to die in the attempt. Every man in the force felt that the task which was before them would not be an easy one, and that unless they gained a victory over their desperate foes they would be in a perilous and, perhaps, inextricable position.

During that afternoon another council of war was held, and it was then arranged that the advanced guard should commence its march towards the Tekké fortress at three o'clock on the following morning, and that the main body should follow an hour later. But, in spite of the orders to this effect which were issued, Prince Dolgoroukoff—accompanied by General Lomakin, Prince Witgenstein, and the headquarters' staff—marched from Yaraji with the advanced guard at two o'clock on the morning of September 9, while the main column, under Count Borch, did not start until 6 A.M.;¹ and thus, although Lomakin knew full well that the enemy was only a few miles distant, the marching orders were, for some inexplicable reason, ignored, and the small Russian army advanced upon the enemy in two detachments, separated from each other by a four-hours' march. Can anyone who possesses the most rudi-

¹ The baggage-train—consisting of 3,500 camels—advanced at a short distance behind Borch's column. It was escorted by six companies of infantry, one sotnia of Cossacks, and two mountain guns, the whole under the command of Captain Kegemoff. The advanced guard consisted of some 900 infantry and five sotnias of cavalry, with six guns and eight rocket-stands; and the main column was composed of about 800 infantry, two sotnias of Cossacks, and a detachment of irregular horse, with four guns.

mentary knowledge of military matters be surprised that a disaster occurred when the day's work began with such an extraordinary blunder?

The remarkable advance of the force from Yaraji to Denghil Tepé was the first mistake which marked the day's proceedings; but it was not the only one, for during the subsequent battle Lomakin, in his great anxiety to win a 'glorious victory,' acted with a reckless want of judgment which brought about his own discomfiture, and turned what should have been a certain victory into an overwhelming defeat.

It is a maxim in Caucasian warfare that when an encampment is attacked one side should always be left open to permit the defenders to escape, in order that they might then be attacked in the open while retreating. But one of Lomakin's first acts on arriving with the advanced guard before the Tekké stronghold was to send the cavalry round to the south-eastern angle of the fortress, to deprive the nomads of their only line of retreat. Having thus penned them in their intrenchments, he commenced the bombardment of the place, and poured a perfect rain of missiles upon the dense masses of human beings who were huddled together behind the low clay ramparts. The effect of this fire was tremendous; each shot produced the greatest devastation, the kibitkas were torn to pieces, and the slaughter was horrible. The unfortunate nomads then tried to break out of the 'aul,' and masses of them were seen to be flying towards Askabad. But they were quickly stopped

by the cavalry and forced to return to the fortress, which was still made the target for the Russian shells. Tekmé Sirdar, a renegade Turkoman chief, who was at the time in the Russian camp, then begged that the bombardment might be discontinued, in order that he might proceed to Denghil Tepé to induce his countrymen to abandon the unequal contest. His offer was, however, refused, and the fiendish slaughter continued. This was the state of affairs at three o'clock in the afternoon, when Count Borch's column arrived before Denghil Tepé.

After these troops had rested for a short while, they were placed in position along the northern front of the fortress; and at 4 P.M.—when the bombardment had lasted for nearly four hours—the Turkoman women and children streamed out of the ‘aul’ in the hope of passing through the Russian lines and escaping; and at about the same time a deputation arrived before the Russian position, asking that the artillery might cease firing and that negotiations might be entered into. ‘The beautiful, swarthy Tekké women threw themselves on their knees at the feet of the Russian troopers, holding forth in their hands suckling babes, and imploring the soldiers in an unknown tongue to have mercy on them. Rows of camels, heavily laden, lay extended alongside, chewing the cud and howling with their disagreeable voices. The weeping of the children, the cries of the old men, the neighing of the horses, the thunder of the cannon and rifle firing, mingled all in a terrible

rumble.' Such is the description of this piteous episode which was given by the correspondent of the 'Novoe Vremya.' But the writer then goes on to relate that 'all were turned back to the "aul." Affecting were these scenes! But war will always remain war.' Such, indeed, is war as waged by Russia in Central Asia. Inoffensive women and little children were ruthlessly hunted back into the settlement, so that the butcher's bill might be increased at the expense of humanity, and in order that the very magnitude of the slaughter might be pointed to in proof of the greatness of the expected victory.

The Tekké deputation was also turned back, and after the bombardment had been maintained with increased fierceness for another hour Lomakin gave orders for the place to be stormed.

This decision and the manner in which the assault was delivered were the crowning mistakes of the battle. It was little short of madness for 1,400 Russian troops¹ to attempt to assault a fortified enclosure defended by some 15,000 men, who were cut off from all chance of escape, who knew full well that they could expect no quarter, and who had been driven to desperation by the terrible massacre of their wives and children. The bombardment had done its work; and if the assault had not been delivered the Tekkés would

¹ Although the Russian force before Denghil Tepé was some 3,000 strong, only 1,400 men advanced to the assault. The remainder comprised the cavalry and the escort of the baggage-train.

certainly have either surrendered at discretion or have endeavoured to escape during the night, in which case they could have easily been overtaken by the cavalry long ere they reached Askabad.

But as the 'Moscow Gazette' very sagely remarked: 'In giving the order to storm, the disposer thought, as the official statement puts it, "that the combined and prolonged action of twelve guns could not but inflict enormous losses on the enemy, and produce on him an overwhelming impression;" in consequence of which there was reason to believe that "the population and defenders of Denghil Tepé were already reduced to an extremity which would force them to offer us complete submission." But this is all words—mere words. Reduced to pretended "extremity," "struck with panic," the enemy "continued from the walls everywhere a *strengthened* fire," which could hardly have been accepted as a symptom of demoralisation. This strengthened fire was more against the advisability of an attack than in favour of it; and the same also with the "news received" of the intention of the enemy to abandon the "aul." It only remained to increase the cannonade and to take measures to overtake and disperse on the open plain the infantry of the enemy, who, as the affair at Denghil Tepé clearly demonstrated, could not withstand the shock of our infantry. *The disposer seemed to be frightened lest Denghil Tepé should come into our possession without an assault.*'

Precisely so. An assault was necessary in

order that the finishing touch might be given to the 'glorious victory' which was expected, and so that Lomakin and his lieutenants might gain distinction.

But although the assault was a mistake, the manner in which it was carried out was still more faulty. Instead of concentrating his force and making a determined attack at one point of the works, the 'disposer' pushed his troops forward in a long weak line, without any supports, and even without scaling-ladders, although numbers of these useful articles had been brought forward from Yaraji, and could have been utilised during the assault. Thus, when the attacking soldiers reached the first line of obstacles, they soon got separated into small detached groups, and, in spite of their brave efforts, were quickly cut down or driven back by the overwhelming numbers of their enemies.

The fall of evening put an end to the battle, and the remnants of the Russian army then gradually concentrated in a camp about a mile from the fortress, where they spent the night in momentary fear of attack. But the Tekkés were too fully occupied with their own misfortunes to have any desire for further fighting. The night thus passed in silence, and when the following morning dawned the Russians were in full retreat towards the Atrek.

Thus ended this disastrous campaign of 1879 against the Tekké Turkomans of the Akhal Oasis. All the Russian troops were soon afterwards sent back to the Caucasus, with the exception of eight battalions which were left to guard the line of

fortified posts between Chikishliar and Duz Olum ; and on January 8, 1880, General Tergoukasoff, who had been appointed to succeed Lazareff, arrived in Tiflis to confer with the Grand Duke as to the arrangements which had to be made for a fresh campaign against the brave defenders of Denghil Tepé.

Lomakin had thrown away his last chance, and he soon disappeared from off the Central Asian stage amid the execrations of his countrymen, and with no one to defend the feeble tactics and merciless conduct which were displayed by him on this memorable 9th of September, and which were the chief causes of the terrible disaster which then occurred. Alikhanoff, who was present during the action, has said that ‘ the whole course of the battle of the 9th of September, from beginning to end, was in defiance of the commonest elementary rules of the art of war,’ and such undoubtedly was the case ; and, in addition to this, the whole course of the action was marked by such pitiless severity, and by such a wanton and unnecessary destruction of human life, that Lomakin’s discomfiture can only be considered to be a just retribution for the cruelty which marked the day’s proceedings.

Such is the story of the miserable failure before the Tekké settlement of Denghil Tepé. The whole expedition had been mismanaged from beginning to end : the troops had been collected at the base before they were required, the transport arrangements had been faulty, and when a small detachment was eventually brought face to

face with the enemy, the Russian soldiers were sacrificed through the feeble tactics and incompetence of their leader. The 'glorious victory' which had been expected was not won, but in its stead a crushing defeat had been sustained; the enormous destruction of human life and the wanton massacre of innocent women and children had unexpectedly failed to advance Russian interests; and the close of the year 1879 found the Tekké Turkomans of Akhal still independent of Muscovite control.

CHAPTER XVI

1879-1881

SKOBELEFF'S CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE TEKKÉS

Murder of Sir Louis Cavagnari at Kabul—British operations in Afghanistan—March to Kandahar, and defeat of Ayub Khan's army—Controversy on the retention of Kandahar—British withdrawal from Afghanistan—New Russian expedition against the Tekké Turkomans—Trans-Caspian Railway commenced—Skobelev's advance to Denghil Tepé—Capture of the fortress and slaughter of the Tekkés.

WHEN the treaty of peace between Great Britain and Afghanistan was signed by Yakoob Khan at Gandamak on May 26, 1879, it was generally believed, both in England and Russia, that British supremacy had been definitely re-established in Afghanistan, and that there was no immediate prospect of any fresh collision between the English and Afghan armies. It is true that no one expected that the new order of things would be accepted by the whole of the turbulent inhabitants of Afghanistan without some display of hostility towards the Amir, for it was well known that there were several factions which were opposed to the new ruler of the kingdom of Kabul. Such a condition was, however, unavoidable, and the probability of civil war would have been equally great

if any other claimant to the throne had been chosen instead of Shere Ali's third son; for no chief ever gained possession of the Afghan throne until he first crushed his rivals and thus demonstrated his ability to uphold his position by force of arms.

But although the outbreak of intertribal warfare and faction fights was believed to be by no means improbable, it was nevertheless generally considered that, among all the possible claimants to the throne, Yakoob Khan was the one who would prove most capable of maintaining his position and authority; and there were reasonable grounds for the belief that he would wisely abstain from further questionable correspondence and intrigues with the Russian authorities in Central Asia.

In Russia, also, the settlement was believed to be so advantageous for the English, and therefore so unsatisfactory from a Russian point of view, that the Muscovite press was flooded with articles on the triumph of English policy in Central Asia, in which the writers were unable to disguise their mortification at the change which had taken place in the political situation. They displayed considerable alarm at the results which had been brought about by the signature of the Treaty of Gandamak, and some even went so far as to suggest the possible extension of British influence throughout Eastern Turkestan and as far north as the Thian-Shan Mountains.

But while the English were congratulating themselves on the successful conclusion of an almost bloodless campaign, and while the Russians

were discussing the best means of counteracting the advantages which had been obtained by England, intelligence was received from India of a terrible event, which caused a profound sensation throughout the civilised world and recalled to memory the dark days of 1841, when Burnes and Macnaghten were treacherously murdered at Kabul, and when Elphinstone's brigade was annihilated in the wild passes of Eastern Afghanistan. On September 3—i.e. six days before Lomakin's defeat at Denghil Tepé—Sir Louis Cavagnari, the newly appointed British Resident at Kabul, together with the officers of his staff and the whole of his escort, had been slain by the fanatical populace and soldiery of the Afghan capital.

It is not necessary to enter into details of this treacherous deed, or to describe the subsequent military operations which were carried on for the purpose of avenging the murder of the British envoy and his devoted companions, and for the re-establishment of British supremacy throughout Eastern and Northern Afghanistan. It is sufficient merely to state that by the 11th of the following month the Kuram Valley field force, under Sir Frederick Roberts, had twice defeated the Afghans and had occupied Kabul; Yakooob Khan was deposed and sent to India; and, after the British troops had occupied the country for several months and had some severe fighting, it was finally decided that Kabul should be evacuated and handed over to Abdur Rahman Khan, who would be recognised by the Indian Government as

Amir of Afghanistan,¹ but that Kandahar would be placed under the independent rule of a Barakzai prince.²

But five days after Mr. (now Sir Lepel) Griffin had publicly announced in a durbar at Sherpur that the Indian Government recognised Abdur Rahman Khan as Amir of Kabul, Ayub Khan, with a large army from Herat, defeated Burrow's brigade at Maiwand; Kandahar was shortly afterwards besieged by the Herat troops; and Sir Donald Stewart, who was commanding the British forces in Northern Afghanistan, received orders to despatch a strong division, under Sir Frederick Roberts, to relieve the garrison in the southern capital and also to scatter the forces of the dangerous Herat chieftain. While General Roberts

¹ Early in 1880 it was rumoured that Abdur Rahman Khan, who had for so many years been a refugee in Russian territory, had left Samarkand, and it soon became known that he had crossed the Oxus and was endeavouring to gain the support of the people of Afghan-Turkestan. The British authorities at Kabul shortly afterwards entered into negotiations with him; and, although he at first displayed a very considerable amount of mistrust as to the intentions of the English, he eventually advanced slowly towards Kabul, and on July 22, 1880, it was formally declared, at a grand durbar at Sherpur, that the British Government 'publicly recognised Sirdar Abdur Rahman Khan, grandson of the illustrious Dost Mahommed Khan, as Amir of Kabul.'

² In April 1880 Shere Ali, the Afghan governor of Kandahar, and cousin of the Amir of the same name, was informed, in a letter from the Viceroy of India, that he was recognised by the British Government as the independent ruler of Kandahar. He was told that a railway would be constructed to connect his capital with India, that a British Resident would be appointed to his court, and that a British force would be maintained at Kandahar. He was styled the 'Wali,' and a month later he was invested with the insignia of his dignity.

was hastening southwards Abdur Rahman Khan reached Kabul, and Sir Donald Stewart, with the remainder of the Bengal troops, evacuated his positions and marched towards India.

Although Sir Frederick Roberts, by his brilliant forced march to Kandahar and subsequent victory over Ayub's army, relieved the British garrison under General Primrose and removed all immediate danger from the direction of Herat, the recent events caused the Government to reconsider the question of the retention or abandonment of Kandahar. In the previous April the Beaconsfield Ministry had been defeated, and had been succeeded by the Liberals, who viewed with serious misgivings the forward policy of their predecessors with regard to Afghanistan. It was declared that a prolonged occupation of Kandahar would endanger the stability of British rule in India, on account of the increased expenditure which would be incurred, and because it was believed that such an occupation would lead to still further extensions of the British frontiers in the direction of Herat and towards the Hindu-Kush, with incessant military operations and constant conflicts with the inhabitants of the country. The press, both in England and India, was flooded with articles on the subject. Everyone who had any knowledge of Central Asian affairs, and many who had none, joined in the controversy; and while some adduced reasons to show why the retention of Kandahar was of vital importance for the safety of India, others endeavoured to explain how the

Indian Empire would assuredly fall to pieces unless the Government decided to scuttle from the country and revert to the old line of the Indus.

It was not long before the Gladstonian Ministry announced its determination to withdraw from every portion of Afghanistan, and this declaration was soon followed by corresponding action. The Khyber was handed over to the marauding Afridis; the Kurum was placed in charge of the Turi clan; and soon afterwards Kandahar also was evacuated and committed to the care of Abdur Rahman Khan, the new Amir of Kabul. Strategical advantages were abandoned for political considerations. The idea of a Russian invasion of India was said to be a question which only concerned future generations, as it was stated that 'the probability of our having to struggle for Herat or to defend India from Kandahar is so remote that its possibility is hardly worth considering;' and, in accordance with these optimistic ideas, orders were issued for the discontinuance of further work on the proposed railway towards Kandahar.

Such was the state of affairs in the early spring of 1881; and while the British Government were thus flinging away the fruits of the Afghan War, which had cost the country some 18,000,000*l.* and hundreds of valuable lives, news was received that General Skobeleff had captured the Tekké stronghold at Denghil Tepé, and had completely broken the power of the Turkomans of the Akhal Oasis.

When the Russian Government received intelligence of Lomakin's defeat at Denghil Tepé in

September 1879, they at once began to prepare for a fresh campaign against the Tekkés. For the next few months Tergoukassoff was busily engaged in withdrawing the sickly and demoralised troops who had taken part in the expedition, and in making arrangements for the safety of the Russian posts between Chikishliar and Duz Olum. In the following March General Skobelev was appointed to the command of the field army in the Trans-Caspian region, and on May 7, 1880, he left Tiflis and proceeded to the eastern shores of the Caspian.

Profiting by the experience gained in the previous Tekké campaigns, Skobelev determined to advance cautiously and systematically, and to make no decisive attack until he had prepared an advanced base at the western extremity of the Akhal Oasis, and had there collected such troops and stores as might be considered necessary for a prolonged campaign. In accordance with this idea he, shortly after his arrival in the Trans-Caspian Province, proceeded up the Atrek, and, pushing forward with a detachment from the advanced post of Duz Olum, on June 9 occupied Khoja Kala, and after a further march of two days reached the Tekké forts of Bami and Beurma, which were hastily abandoned by the inhabitants on his approach. He then commenced the erection of a fortified store dépôt at Bami, and on June 28 made a reconnaissance in the direction of Artchman, which was evacuated by the enemy after a slight skirmish.

In the meanwhile the Russians experienced

great difficulties on account of the scarcity of camels and other means of transport. To overcome this, General Petrusevitch, who had succeeded Lomakin in the civil administration of the Trans-Caspian district, devised a service of traction engines and wagons for the carriage of stores from the Caspian to the advanced store depôts. This scheme eventually expanded into a more ambitious project for the construction of a tramway between Chikishliar and the Akhal Oasis; and finally, when Skobelev decided to make Krasnovodsk his base of operations, General Annenkoff, the Controller of Military Transport, suggested that a regular line of railway should be constructed from Michaelovsk to Kizil-Arvat. This proposal was approved of by the Russian Government, and as one hundred miles of railway plant were lying idle at Bender it was decided that this *matériel* should be utilised for the purpose. In this way the Trans-Caspian Railway was begun, and although it was originally intended as a temporary line for use during the war, and was looked upon as a very doubtful experiment, it has since developed into an excellent broad-gauge railway connecting Central Asia with European Russia, by means of which the military resources of the Caucasus can be speedily transferred to the borders of the Herat province of Afghanistan, and which thus materially increases the aggressive power of Russia in Central Asia.

But although some forty miles of line were laid by the middle of November, Skobelev had to

depend on camels and carts for transport purposes, and it was not until December that he was ready for the final advance against the Tekké stronghold at Denghil Tepé. He, however, made another reconnaissance from Bami in July, with three companies of infantry, three sotnias of cavalry, four field guns, two howitzers and a rocket-battery, and after some skirmishes with the enemy's cavalry at Artchman, Durun, and Ak Kala, he on the 17th occupied Eghian Batyr, and on the following day made a close examination of the Tekké position. According to the 'Invalide Russe,' 'the Russian force was met by considerable numbers of the enemy's cavalry, and fought its way to within one thousand yards of the outworks of the fortified "auls;" under their cover a reconnaissance of the fortifications was effected, as also a survey of the locality; on the conclusion of which—at 1 P.M.—the Russian force retired. Notwithstanding the repeated attacks of the enemy's infantry and cavalry, during which hand-to-hand fights occurred, the same evening the column reached Eghian Batyr Kala without sustaining any loss; and having at daybreak on July 19 repelled a fresh attack of the Tekkés, the force returned to Bami after destroying a considerable amount of crops and quantities of stores at the "auls" on the line of march.

'During the nine days the casualties on the Russian side were three soldiers killed and eight wounded; they also lost eight horses killed and thirteen wounded. Such inconsiderable loss is

explained by the long range and inaccuracy of the firing. The injury done to the enemy by the destruction of the crops, &c., in the vicinity of Gök Tepé, where about 10,000 Tekkés are concentrated, who have been joined by 700 Merv Tekkés, General Skobelev reports, is felt in the difficulty the Tekkés experience in obtaining supplies and in the outbreak of cattle plague. Moreover, in the engagements of July 18 and 19 several Tekké and Merv chiefs were killed.'

But while Skobelev was gradually pushing forward troops and supplies to the advanced base at Bami, the Turkomans did not remain idle, and made frequent attacks on the Russian patrols and convoys. Thus on July 3 a band of some 300 Tekkés attacked a small party of twelve Cossacks, and, after killing or wounding eight of the number, retired as soon as Russian reinforcements arrived in the shape of a company of infantry. During August repeated attacks were made against the Russian lines of communication between Duz Olum and Bami, and also on a Russian post near the Aidin Wells. Similar raids occurred during the months of September, October, and November; and even on December 23, when Skobelev was preparing for his decisive attack against the Turkoman stronghold at Denghil Tepé, a force of some 1,000 Tekkés suddenly attacked a Russian train of 2,000 camels which was being convoyed by half a company of the Ansheron Regiment. The surprise was complete, and the Tekkés succeeded in driving off the camels; but half a sotnia

of Cossacks quickly pushed forward from the neighbouring post at Kazanjik, and, after a hot pursuit for ten miles, eventually overtook and defeated the nomads, and recaptured the valuable transport animals. In this affair, however, the Russians lost twenty-five men killed and eleven wounded.

By the commencement of December, 1880, the necessary stores had been accumulated at Bami, and troops were then moved forward to that point in order that the final blow might be struck. On December 9 Colonel Navrotsky, advancing along the upper course of the Sumbar river, captured the Tekké fort of Kariz Kala; and a few days later Artchman, Durun, and Eghian Batyr Kala had all been occupied by Russian detachments, and were speedily converted into advanced provision depôts. The last-named fort, which was afterwards called Samur, was selected as the base and *point d'appui* for the further decisive movement against the fortified Tekké villages of Yanghi-Kala, Denghil Tepé, and Gök Tepé, and for this purpose it was considerably strengthened by the addition of new defensive works. It was situated close to the foot of the northern slopes of the Kopet Dag range, and was $13\frac{1}{2}$ versts, or 9 miles, distant from the great Tekké fortress.

On arrival at this point Skobelev received information that the Akhal Tekkés had gained considerable reinforcements from Merv, and that 40,000 warriors were assembled behind the fortifications at Denghil Tepé, where they had resolved to make an obstinate resistance. In order to test

the accuracy of this report, and for the purpose of completing the information which had been gained in the reconnaissance of the previous July, Skobeleff moved out of Samur at daybreak on December 16, with a force of 1,500 men and 16 guns, and, marching by the road which runs parallel to the mountains, occupied the high ground on the left bank of the Sekyz-Yab stream which flows past the Tekké position.

From this point great masses of the enemy were observed to be manning the ramparts of the main position at Denghil Tepé in evident expectation of an attack, while large numbers moved southwards to Yanghi Kala and began to close round the flanks and rear of the Russian detachment. Skobeleff, however, moved slowly northwards past the western front of Denghil Tepé; and after he had carefully examined the defences and had bombarded them for a short time, he gave orders for the force to fall back towards Samur. As soon as the Russians began to retire the Tekkés redoubled their fire, and, issuing in dense masses from their intrenchments, commenced a series of onslaughts against the flanks and rear of the column, which were continued until darkness put an end to the conflict.

On December 23 and again on the following day further reconnaissances were made, and on both occasions the Tekkés violently attacked the Russian detachments. The fighting on these days, however, was less severe than it had been on the 16th, and Skobeleff gained information which enabled him to

make final dispositions for a decisive attack on the Turkoman stronghold.

In the meanwhile fresh troops were daily arriving at Samur, and by the evening of December 31 the total force at that place consisted of 35 companies of infantry and 7 sotnias of cavalry, giving a total of 4,020 bayonets and 750 sabres, with 67 guns and 2 rocket-troughs. Among these reinforcements there was a small contingent of Turkestan troops which had made a remarkable march across the Kara Kum sands from Khiva. This detachment, which consisted of three companies of infantry and two sotnias of cavalry, with a division of mountain guns and a rocket section, was under the command of Colonel Kuropatkin, who had served under Skobelev in the Khivan and Khokandian campaigns and had acted as his chief of the staff during the campaign in European Turkey. After an arduous march from Tashkent to Khiva this detachment had to cross the Kara Kum Desert by an almost unknown route; but, in spite of the great difficulties of the undertaking, it accomplished the journey in a remarkably short space of time, and arrived at Bami on December 20 'clean and trim and fresh as a daisy,' 'having traversed a distance of 400 versts (or 267 miles) in eighteen days, over a sandy desert, starting from the lower course of the Amu Daria, and proceeding by way of Ortakuya, Igdi, and Kizil-Arvat, during which march only two men fell ill.' This splendid body of men reached Samur on December 27, and from

that moment Kuropatkin became one of the leading spirits in the operations against the Tekké fortress.

From the various reconnaissances which had been made, it was found that the Tekkés were occupying a position of considerable extent, which had been greatly strengthened by the construction of rude fortifications at various points. On the north of the line there was a huge fortified enclosure round the hill of Denghil Tepé which constituted the key of the whole position. This enclosure was a mile long from north to south, and had a greatest width of some 1,100 yards. It was surrounded by massive clay ramparts, in which there were numerous entrances on the northern and eastern faces, and on the outside of this wall there was a shallow dry ditch about five feet deep and sixteen feet wide. At various points to the west and east of this fortress there were several small forts, and at about 2,500 yards to the south there was the Kishlak of Yanghi Kala, which was also strongly fortified, and was similarly supported by small outlying 'kalas' of varying strength.

As it was evident that the fortress of Denghil Tepé could not be taken without a regular siege, Skobelev decided to first capture Yanghi Kala, in order that he might obtain possession of the water-supply and threaten the enemy's line of retreat towards Askabad. During the reconnaissances which were made in December it was seen that the Tekkés had apparently no intention of offering a stubborn resistance on the side of Yanghi Kala, but intended to concentrate their energies on the

defence of the large enclosure at Denghil Tepé, and Skobelev therefore determined to carry the works at the southern end of the position by storm. The assault was successfully delivered on January 1, 1881; and by sunset the troops were securely established in an intrenched camp which was constructed at a distance of about 2,000 yards from the southern wall of Denghil Tepé.

On the following day Major-General Petrusevitch and the commanding engineer made a reconnaissance of the eastern and northern fronts of the fortress, and as it was then decided that the south-eastern angle of the enclosure could be most easily attacked, Colonel Kuropatkin, on January 3, seized a couple of outlying Kalas¹ on the south-eastern front so as to secure the right flank of the approaches, and he also drove the enemy out of the gardens and fortified enclosures farther to the north. The first parallel was commenced at dawn on January 4, at a distance of 700 yards from the walls of the fortress; and in order to divert the attention of the enemy from the working parties a demonstration was again made against the gardens on the north-eastern side, which had been re-occupied by the Tekkés. There a desperate encounter took place, and although the Russians gained a footing in the outskirts of the gardens they were unable to expel the defenders from their main position, and, being in turn attacked by masses of Tekkés who sallied forth from Denghil Tepé, they

¹ These were afterwards named the 'Right-flank Kala' and 'Grand Duke Kala.'

were at last compelled to fall back, after they had lost three officers and nineteen men killed, and one officer and forty-nine men wounded. Among the killed was Major-General Petrusevitch, who commanded the attack, and by his death Skobelev was deprived of the services of an extremely energetic assistant, and Russia lost one of her bravest and most distinguished officers in Central Asia. When the Russian column had reached the fortification which formed the key of the Tekkés' outlying position, Petrusevitch dismounted, and, placing himself at the head of the leading troops, rushed into the gateway of the fort. The entrance was speedily carried; but as the assailants were forcing their way into the courtyard beyond they were received by a heavy volley from the Tekkés, who were hidden behind a cleverly constructed ambuscade. Petrusevitch fell mortally wounded, and with him another officer, and several privates were either killed or wounded. In the evening a funeral service was performed over the bodies of the officers and men who had fallen in the fight, and at the moment when the words in the Russian burial service 'eternal remembrance to the dead' were repeated the whole of the artillery fired a volley into the fortress, from whence 'cries and groans immediately issued, showing that the iron tears had not been shed in vain.'

Whilst this demonstration was taking place on the right flank, 1,250 men were busily employed in the construction of the first parallel; and before dawn on the following day this had been

completed, approaches had been made to it, and three redoubts and a couple of siege batteries had also been finished and armed.

From this time the approaches were steadily pushed forward, and, in spite of the constant sorties of the garrison, the remaining outlying forts on the south-east front were captured; and by the evening of January 22 the sappers had reached the ditch of the fortress, and a mine gallery had been driven under the ramparts at the south-eastern corner of the defences. On the following day 2,600 pounds of gunpowder were laid at the head of the mine, and during the next night the tamping was commenced, and orders were issued for the grand assault of the fortress, which was to take place on the morning of the 24th.

The orders for the attack were briefly as follows:—

(I.) At 7 A.M. a column, under Lieutenant-Colonel Haidaroff, consisting of four and a quarter companies, two volunteer detachments, and one and a half sotnias, with five guns and five rocket-stands, was to move out of the camp and attack the 'Mill Kala' and other outworks on the western side of Denghil Tepé; and when these had been captured it was to operate against the interior of the fortress with a heavy rifle and artillery fire, so as to divert the attention of the garrison from the main attacking columns under Kuropatkin and Kozelkoff.

(II.) While this detachment was thus engaged the whole of the artillery was to open fire on the fortress, and to maintain the bombardment until

the signal for the assault was given by the explosion of the great mine.

(III.) Colonel Kuropatkin was placed in command of one of the storming columns (consisting of eleven and a half companies, and one detachment of volunteers, with six guns and two rocket-stands), and his orders were to capture the breach made by the explosion of the mine, to effect a junction with Kozelkoff's party, and to intrench himself within the south-eastern angle of the fortress.

(IV.) Another storming party, consisting of eight and a quarter companies, and two detachments of volunteers, with three guns and two rocket-stands, under Colonel Kozelkoff, was at the same time to capture the breach which had been made by the artillery four days previously at the extreme southern angle of the fortress, and after it had formed a junction with Kuropatkin's force it was to intrench itself in general co-operation with that column.

(V.) The reserve, under the personal command of General Skobeleff, consisting of twenty-one companies with twenty-four guns, was to assemble at the redoubt on the left of the first parallel for employment as might be found necessary; and the remainder of the force (i.e. four companies, and two and a half sotnias, with forty-one guns) was held in readiness for the defence of the camp and lines.

In accordance with these orders Haidaroff's column moved out of the camp at 7 A.M. on January 24, and within an hour and a half the Mill Kala and adjoining outposts had been captured and

placed in a state of defence. The guns and rockets attached to this party then bombarded the southern corner of the fortress, and at the same time twenty-seven guns opened fire on the breach at the southern extremity of the enclosure, so as to complete it and make it practicable for the storming party. Notwithstanding this terrible fire the Tekkés made heroic attempts to repair the breach, and continued their endeavours up till the moment of the assault, in spite of the hail of shrapnel and common shell which was poured incessantly upon the spot.

The slaughter at this point was fearful, and this appalling scene of destruction and death was continued until twenty minutes past eleven, when a tremendous roar was heard above the din of the cannon and rattle of musketry, and, while the earth was shaken by a violent concussion, a dense column of mud and smoke rose high above the ramparts on the eastern side of the doomed fortress. The mine had been sprung, and a practicable breach had been formed nearly fifty yards wide.

Almost before the smoke from the explosion had cleared away Kuropatkin's column issued from its cover and advanced impetuously towards the breach; but before they had traversed half the intervening space they were received by a murderous fire from the Tekkés, who, in spite of the force and unexpectedness of the explosion, had rushed without any hesitation into the gap which had been formed in the ramparts. For a few moments the Russian column hesitated, and

appeared to stagger under the storm of lead which tore through its ranks; but on fresh troops being sent to its support the advance was quickly renewed, and, after a fierce hand-to-hand fight with bayonets, lances, and swords, the breach was won, and the walls to its right and left were occupied by the brave troops of the Shirwan Regiment and 13th Turkestan line battalion, who were gallantly assisted by a detachment of dismounted Ural Cossacks and a party of volunteers under Lieutenant Voropanoff.

While Kuropatkin's column was thus successfully assailing the breach on the south-eastern face of the fortress, similar encounters were taking place at other points of the defences. As soon as the mine exploded Kozelkoff's party issued from the trenches and advanced at a run towards the breach on the south, which they soon reached in spite of the heavy fire which was kept up by the Tekkés. On arriving at the foot of it, however, their progress was checked, and they lay down in the ditch and maintained an obstinate engagement with the defenders until reinforcements were sent forward from the reserve. When these fresh troops arrived the advance was once more continued, and while the main body forced an entrance at the breach, other parties on the flanks escalated the walls by means of scaling-ladders and soon joined hands with Kuropatkin's column. Haidaroff's troops at the same time scaled the ramparts on the western face; and by 12.30 P.M. the Russians had forced an entry into the fortress

at three points, and the ultimate success of the operations was fully assured.

In accordance with the orders which had been issued the troops at once began to intrench themselves at the points which had been captured; but as Skobelev saw the undoubted success which had been gained by all the columns, he at once decided to follow up the attack by a general advance on the Denghil Tepé hill, which was the tactical key of the fortress. By this time the Tekkés had begun to give way at all points, and, seeing the hopelessness of further resistance, a disordered crowd of men, women, and children began to stream towards the northern walls of the fortress, and thence continued their flight into the desert. The fighting was over, and what followed was nothing less than a merciless massacre of an unresisting mob. The infantry continued the pursuit for seven miles, and the cavalry carried it on for another four miles; and when darkness put an end to the slaughter it was found that 8,000 Tekkés of both sexes had been slain during the pursuit, while 6,500 corpses were also found within the enclosure. Skobelev himself estimated the total loss of the Turkomans during the siege at 20,000—or, in other words, half the defenders of Denghil Tepé perished.

Thus ended this great campaign against the Tekké Turkomans of Akhal. The brilliant Skobelev had completely avenged the previous disasters which had been brought about through the incompetence of his predecessors; and after a long

series of checks and defeats the might of the troops of the Great White Czar had been at last clearly established before the wild races of Central Asia.

As soon as Denghil Tepé had fallen, Skobeleff pushed rapidly eastwards in pursuit of the two Tekké leaders—Tekmé Sirdar¹ and Makhdum Kuli Khan—who had escaped, and were flying towards Merv; and Askabad, the capital of the Akhal country, and Annau, a Tekké fort some few miles farther east, were speedily occupied by Russian detachments. Any further advance in the direction of Merv, however, was at that time impossible on account of the heavy losses which had been sustained by the Russians during the campaign,² and it was only for this reason that

¹ Tekmé Sirdar surrendered to Skobeleff at Askabad on the 9th of the following April, and, having tendered his submission, he was sent to St. Petersburg with his son and three other Tekké chieftains, in order that they might obtain an insight into the resources of the Empire of the Great White Czar. The deputation reached St. Petersburg on May 27, and nine days later the chiefs were presented to the Emperor at Gatchina, when they were cordially received. During the interview the Czar with his own hands gave to Tekmé Sirdar the silver epaulettes of a major of militia, and informed the chieftain of his elevation to that rank in the Russian service; and he shortly afterwards received an appointment in the Civil Administration of the newly-acquired territory. Makhdum Kuli Khan, however, held aloof and rejected many offers which were made to him by the Russian secret agents; and it was not until Alikhanoff visited the Merv Oasis in the spring of 1882 that this chief eventually decided to throw in his lot with Russia.

² During the operations from January 1 to 24 the Russians lost 16 officers and 267 men killed, and 55 officers and 770 men wounded; or a total of 1,108 out of a force of about 5,000 men. Thus, after garrisons had been provided for Denghil Tepé,

Merv was not then attacked and annexed to the Czar's dominions.

Askabad, and other points along the route, Skobelev could not have mustered more than 2,000 or 2,500 men for active operations against Merv. His ammunition and provisions had, moreover, become nearly exhausted, and the transport arrangements could not have borne the strain of such an extension of the campaign. It will thus be seen that Merv escaped being attacked on account of the unfitness of Skobelev's army for further fighting on a large scale, and not because the Russian Government had any regard for English susceptibilities.

CHAPTER XVII

1881—1884

ANNEXATION OF MERV

English fears regarding Merv and Russian assurances—The ‘Trans-Caspian Territory’—Russo-Persian frontier line—Russian intrigues at Merv—Commercial treaty with the Turkomans of Merv—Russian ‘traders’ and ‘scientific explorers’—Tricks to hide aggressive intentions—Lessar’s explorations—The Atak Oasis—England’s hour of trouble Russia’s opportunity—Annexation of Merv.

IN England, where the exhausted condition of Skobelev’s army was at the time unknown, it was commonly believed that an advance was about to be made on Merv immediately after the taking of Daghil Tepé, and the general anxiety was therefore somewhat allayed when the Russian Government announced that they had no intention of undertaking any further military operations in that direction. On January 26 M. de Giers informed Lord Dufferin, the British Ambassador at St. Petersburg, that as the power of the Tekké Turkomans had been signally broken, ‘the time had come for the Russian Government to show its moderation, and to take care not to allow itself to be entangled in any further military operations in that quarter of the world;’ and, in order that there

might be no misconception, the Czar's entire approval of this declaration was shortly afterwards conveyed to the British Ambassador. Nor were these the only assurances which were then given that Merv would not be occupied, for on March 7, after similar promises had been made to Lord Granville by the Russian Ambassador in London, M. de Giers once again told Lord Dufferin that he had been authorised by the Czar to declare that his Majesty had no intention of advancing towards Merv. 'Not only,' said M. de Giers, 'do we not want to go there, but, happily, there is nothing which can require us to go there.'

The word of the Russian Emperor was thus pledged that Merv would not be occupied, and, as Skobelev shortly afterwards returned to Russia, the English people believed that the Russians at last honestly intended to abstain from further conquests. They forgot that similar pledges had been given on many previous occasions, only to be broken whenever it suited Russia to do so; and although a large slice of Khivan territory had been annexed to Russia eight short years before, in spite of an Emperor's solemn promise to the contrary, yet some people were still to be found in England who believed, or pretended to believe, that Merv would not be occupied because the same Emperor gave a similar assurance that he had no intention of advancing beyond the limits of the territory already occupied by Skobelev's army. It was undoubtedly a pleasant and convenient theory, and enabled politicians in England of a certain

class to point to the moderation of the great Russian Emperor, and to explain to admiring audiences that this happy condition of affairs was due to the conciliatory policy of the Gladstone Cabinet in having ordered the evacuation of Kandahar, little dreaming, however, that while they were expounding their comfortable doctrines Skobelev was 'sending agents into the bazaars of Central Asia to spread throughout that region the report that it was the White Czar who had compelled England to evacuate Afghanistan.'

It was merely a repetition of the old farce which had been played so often on the Central Asian stage; and on May 24, 1881, a final touch was given to the comedy by the publication of an Imperial Ukase, in which it was announced that the territory of the Tekké Turkomans which was then occupied by Russian troops was annexed to the Czar's Empire, and that this new tract of country, together with the Trans-Caspian military district, was thenceforth to be known as the 'Trans-Caspian Territory' and form a portion of the Caucasus administration. Thus, at the time when a series of fresh promises was being readily given by the Czar and his ministers with regard to Merv, previous engagements of a similar character were being deliberately set aside by Imperial edict.¹

¹ It must be remembered, as mentioned in Chapter XV., that on April 5, 1875, Prince Gortchakoff, in a letter to the Russian Ambassador in London, stated: 'His Imperial Majesty has no intention of extending the frontiers of Russia, such as they exist at present in Central Asia, either on the side of Bokhara or on the side of

Such is diplomacy as understood by Russia, and such it will remain until the patience of England is exhausted; and then—when a display of force takes the place of blind belief in the pledges of Muscovite Czars and statesmen—a period will be put to Russian advances towards the British Empire in India. Until such a time arrives—as it sooner or later must—there will be a continual display of restlessness at one or more points on the Russian frontier, some sore will always be kept open, and Russia will be ever ready to move forward and secure some fresh strategical position whenever the attention of the English people is attracted to some other portion of their vast Empire. This fact must be clearly understood; for Russian promises afford no guarantee for the peace and safety of the Indian Empire, and the time is near at hand when further advances must be resisted by force unless the English people intend to madly respond to the cry of ‘Perish India,’ and decide—which they assuredly will never do—that peace with dishonour is preferable to a war in defence of the great Empire which their forefathers have built up, and which is the pride and mainstay¹ of Greater Britain.

Krasnovodsk and of the Atrek.’ And yet, after six years spent in incessant military operations beyond the frontier, an order appeared annexing a large slice of territory, and advancing the frontier line to a point 370 miles east of Krasnovodsk.

¹ Sir George Birdwood, in his introduction to *The First Letter Book of the East India Company, 1600–1619*, states that it was the Company’s possession of India which enabled England, at the commencement of the present century, to successfully resist the machinations of Napoleon I., and he declares that ‘the continued

It will soon be shown how these fresh promises of the Emperor and his ministers shared the same fate as those which had gone before, and how the Russian Government took advantage of England's difficulties in Egypt to occupy Merv and to drive a wedge into Afghanistan by the forcible occupation of various points which undoubtedly formed part of the Amir's dominions.

As soon as the ukase announcing the annexation of Akhal was published, it was noticed that no precise definition had been given as to the boundaries or extent of the territory in question, and the Chargé d'Affaires at St. Petersburg was instructed to gain information on this point. When Mr. Wyndham accordingly applied to M. de Giers, he was told that the boundaries had not been marked out, but that this would soon be done; and a few days later, in reply to a further reference on the subject, his Excellency stated that he did not know what the boundaries were, and that, although he did not think that there would be any secret about them, he could not make any engagement beforehand as to making them known; and he then testily added, 'You do the same thing' (meaning 'You annex territory'), 'and I am not aware that you are asked what your frontiers are.' Similar evasive replies were given from time to time during the summer and autumn of

possession of India will be our chief stay in sustaining the manufacturing and mercantile preponderance in this country in the crushing commercial competition with which we have now everywhere to contend.'

the year, and no definite information on this point could be obtained until a convention had been signed at Teheran on December 21, 1881, in which the Russo-Persian frontier line was fixed as far eastwards as the fort of Baba-Durmaz.¹

But, although it was a matter of considerable satisfaction to the English that this portion of the frontier had been thus definitely laid down, the general feeling of relief which had been caused by this settlement of one section of the Russo-Persian boundary was soon followed by a fresh revival of mistrust when it was realised that the most important portion of the frontier line (*viz.* that in the direction of Merv and Herat) had been omitted from the treaty. It, moreover, gradually became known that Russia intended to contest Persia's unquestionable rights over the Atak, which is the strip of fertile territory to the north of the mountains stretching from the Russian frontier at Baba-Durmaz to the neighbourhood of Sarahks; and sinister rumours were also heard of Russian intrigues at Merv and of movements of Muscovite agents in the vicinity of Herat itself.

¹ This Convention contained nine articles, the first of which described the new frontier line. The other articles provided for the appointment of commissioners to trace the boundary in detail, and settled other minor points regarding the water-supply from the streams which flow from the mountains into the Akhal country, &c. Article III. contained a strange proof of the high-handed manner in which the Russians laid down the frontier line; for in that article it was expressly stipulated that the Persians should evacuate the forts of Germab and Kilkilab within one year from the date of the ratification of the treaty, it being thus tacitly acknowledged that those forts were within the former Persian frontier line.

Soon after the occupation of Askabad secret emissaries were sent to Merv for the purpose of creating a pro-Russian party amongst the more influential chieftains in the oasis. These agents encouraged the Tekkés to visit Askabad to traffic in the bazaar which the Russians had opened at that place, and before many weeks had passed numbers of the inhabitants of the Merv Oasis were to be seen bartering in the shops of Askabad with the Armenian merchants from the Caucasus, who had found their way to the Akhal country in the hope of establishing a lucrative trade with the countries beyond the borders of the new Russian province. When the first arrivals found that they were well received and obtained high prices for their supplies, they were followed by many others, and in course of time the more influential chiefs also followed suit, and in this way the Trans-Caspian officials gradually gained the friendship and support of a by no means inconsiderable section of the population of the Merv Oasis.

But while the Askabad authorities were thus preparing the way for a Russian occupation of Merv, the Turkestan officials were also busily engaged in similar intrigues from the direction of Samarkand and Khiva. The Turkestan administration had up till this time taken a leading part in Central Asian affairs, and as Kaufmann and his subordinates viewed the rapid growth of a rival administration in Trans-Caspia with a certain amount of jealousy, they also adopted the same

measures as were being so successfully employed by General Rohrberg.¹

The Tekkés of Merv at this time did not grasp the fact that the Turkestan and Trans-Caspian administrations were offshoots from one and the same Central Government, and, in their ignorance, many of them saw in the overtures from Turkestan a possible means of escape from the more clearly defined danger which threatened them from the direction of Askabad. Thus, while Russian agents from Akhal were engaged in their endeavours to create a pro-Russian party in Merv, a deputation of the elders of the Otamish tribe of Tekké Turkomans went to Fort Petro-Alexandrovsk and there concluded a treaty with the Governor of the Amu Daria province, whereby they agreed to place themselves under the protection of the Russian Government as represented by the commandant of the Amu Daria, and promised to receive any agents who might from time to time be sent to them by that officer.²

¹ General Rohrberg succeeded Skobeleff in the administration of the Trans-Caspian military district in the spring of 1881.

² Rumours concerning the negotiation of this treaty soon reached England, and when Mr. Wyndham drew M. de Giers' attention to the matter the Russian Foreign Minister denied that there was any truth in the report that such a treaty was being negotiated with the Turkomans of Merv; and Baron Jomini also stated that no formal negotiations were taking place for a treaty with the Turkomans of Merv. In the summer of the following year (1882), however, the British Ambassador at Teheran forwarded a copy of the treaty to Lord Granville, together with copies of a couple of letters from Baron Aminoff, the chief of the staff at Askabad, in which that officer congratulated the Khans and elders of Merv on their having 'at last awoke to their true interests' by

The Turkestan authorities thus scored the first success in the game which was then being played as to which of the two rival Russian administrations in Central Asia would obtain the honour of being able to lay the submission of the people of Merv at the feet of the Imperial master; but it was not long before the Trans-Caspian officials in their turn adopted measures which proved far more effectual in gaining the desired object. When news reached Askabad of the conclusion of the convention between the Otamish tribe and the commandant of Fort Petro-Alexandrovsk, Colonel Rohrberg—the governor of the Trans-Caspian district—had left Askabad for St. Petersburg to confer with the authorities there on matters concerning the administration of the newly-acquired region; and in his absence Colonel Aminoff thought it advisable to make it clear to the elders of Merv that Turkestan and Askabad were portions of the same great Empire, and that therefore the fact that they had sought the protection of the commandant of the Amu Daria afforded much satisfaction to the Governor of Trans-Caspia, as being a proof of their desire to solicit the friendship and protection of his master, the Czar.

Having thus hinted to the Tekkés that they were in a helpless condition between two outstretched Russian arms which were gradually being drawn towards each other, and which would assuredly envelop and crush everything that lay

seeking the protection of the Czar. The truth of the original reports was thus clearly established in spite of the Russian denials.

between them, Baron Aminoff then decided to send Russian officers in disguise to Merv in order that a survey of the Oasis might be secretly prepared, and in the hope that more of the inhabitants might be won over to the pro-Russian party.

The method in which this idea was carried out was quite in keeping with the time-honoured traditions of Russian policy in Central Asia, and affords an excellent example of the manner in which the Russian authorities employ so-called 'traders' or 'scientific explorers' as a cloak to hide their aggressive designs against the wild states of Central Asia. Whenever they find that they have arrived on the borders of a state or tribe which is unusually suspicious or resentful of interference, there comes a pause in their onward advance, and then a scientific mission or trading caravan starts off—of course purely in the interests of science, or for the development of peaceful and commercial enterprise. The scientific mission generally consists of some topographers and other officers, accompanied by an escort of Cossacks, who make a reconnaissance of the country; while the trader is usually accompanied by surveyors sent for the same purpose. In either case intrigues are carried on with the inhabitants, who are given a glowing account of the advantages of Russian rule, and are impressed with the dangers of resisting the authority of the Great White Czar; the country is quietly mapped, and its resources are carefully noted; and thus preparations are made for its subsequent annexation. In some cases the leading

chiefs or rulers are persuaded to voluntarily tender their submission, and the country is then quietly occupied; but as often as not an attack is made on these parties, when the ultimate result is the same, for thereby a plausible pretext is obtained for armed interference, such attack being held up as a convincing proof of the barbarity of the state or tribe in question, and of the necessity for extending to it the blessings of civilisation.

This may appear to be an exaggerated description of one of the methods which the Russians frequently adopt for the extension of their frontiers in Central Asia. Such, however, is not the case, for from the earliest days in which they have had any dealings with Asiatic races they have had resort to similar—and even more questionable—subterfuges for the purpose of advancing their interests at the expense of their weaker neighbours. It has already been seen how the merchant Khlu-doff combined diplomacy with trade, and was sent to Eastern Turkestan at a time when Yakoob Beg, by his dignified independence, put a stop to Russian encroachments in the direction of Kashgar. Since that time this method of spying out the strength of neighbouring states has been frequently adopted; and it is only necessary to mention the names of Alikhanoff, Lessar, and Naziroff to complete the proof of the accuracy of the above description of one of the tricks of the Russians to hide their aggressive designs under the mask of civilisation, science, and commerce.

Alikhanoff's reconnaissance of the Merv Oasis is

an excellent example of the way in which Russian explorers in Central Asia frequently gain their object while masquerading in the disguise of traders.¹ But while he was obtaining information regarding Merv, another party, under the young engineer named Lessar, was carefully examining the country between Askabad and Herat ‘in the interests of science.’

The Trans-Caspian Railway, which had been commenced during Skobeleff’s campaign against the Tekkés, was completed as far as Kizil-Arvat by the middle of September 1881—nine months after the capture of Denghil Tepé; and as General Annenkoff, the original designer of the line, had a short time previously published a *brochure* in which he proposed that the line should be continued through Sarakhs and Herat to join the Indian railway system in the neighbourhood of Kandahar, advantage was taken of the idea to obtain a thorough survey of the country between Askabad and Herat.

At the beginning of October 1881 Lessar, accompanied by an escort of Cossacks, commenced the survey of the first section of the proposed line from Kizil-Arvat to Askabad and Sarakhs, and having thoroughly examined the whole of the intervening country and found that it was almost perfectly level and well adapted for the construction of a cheap railway, he then returned to Askabad in December, viâ Meshed and Mahomme-

¹ For an interesting account of this reconnaissance, see *The Russians at Merv and Herat*, by the late Mr. Charles Marvin.

dabad, and soon afterwards proceeded to Europe to obtain the latest maps of the country through which his subsequent travels were to be made.

Although only four months elapsed between his first and second journeys, yet the state of affairs on the Russian border had greatly changed during the interval, for the Tekkés and other tribes inhabiting the Atak and districts beyond Sarakhs had become more accustomed to their new neighbours, and the country between Askabad and Sarakhs had become so pacified that travellers could move about without any larger escort than was necessary for their protection against casual robbers. For this reason he dispensed with any regular military escort and was accompanied by twenty well-mounted Alieli Turkomans from the Kahka settlement, who supplied their own food and fodder for their horses, but received payment for their services at the rate of forty roubles per month. Ten of these men were supplied with Berdan rifles, while the others carried their own muzzle-loading guns; and, in addition to these weapons, each man carried on his person a whole arsenal of pistols and knives.

Leaving Askabad on the evening of April 28, 1882, Lessar travelled over the ground which he had previously surveyed, and reached Sarakhs on May 3. There he halted for a day as the guest of the Persian commandant, and then, crossing to the right bank of the Heri-Rud,¹ continued his

¹ This river has its sources in the great mountainous mass
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journey towards Herat through districts which had never before been traversed by Europeans. A march of about 150 miles through an undulating country, covered with rich grass and numerous groves of pistachio and mulberry trees, brought the explorer to the foot of the Barkhut range, which is a portion of the Paropamisus Mountains—the mythical barrier which for more than half a century was believed to constitute an almost impossible obstacle to any advance on Herat from the north.

There a great surprise was awaiting him; for, instead of finding a great mountain-chain barring his further progress, he met with no greater obstruction than was to be found in an insignificant range of hills traversed by a pass whose summit was only 900 feet above the surrounding locality, and not more than 3,100 feet above the level of the sea. The ascent of the pass from the north ‘presented no difficulties, and the descent towards Kusan on the southern side was more sloping and convenient than the ascent,’ and could even then have been traversed by carts; while the entire defile—if such a name can be applied to such a ridiculously easy crossing—could with but

formed by the junction of the Koh-i-Baba, Safed-Koh, and Siah-Koh ranges. There are two principal tributaries—the Tingal-ab and the Jungal-ab—which unite near the post of Daulat-Yar. From that point the river becomes known by the name Heri-Rud, and, flowing in a westerly direction past the fortresses of Herat and Ghurian, it turns towards the north at Kusan, and, after passing Sarakhs, flows in a north-westerly direction, and finally disappears in a series of swamps in the Kara-kum Desert. Below (*i.e.* to the north of) Sarakhs it is called the Tejend.

little labour have been made traversable by wheeled vehicles. At about half-way down the southern slope, where the track takes the form of a regular roadway, there is a sweet-water spring named Chombou, from whence the same gentle descent continues for another six versts (four miles), after which the road divides, one branch leading to Pesh-Robat (Toman Aga) on the western bank of the Heri-Rud, while the other goes to Kusan, both running through level country.

Lessar, in his report, after describing this route, then goes on to say :—

‘The road through Chombou is the most convenient for wheeled traffic. In addition to it there are several other routes which also run between the Heri-Rud and Murghab from north to south, and which are connected with each other by transverse roads.

‘I collected information respecting all these roads. As a possible road for wheeled vehicles from Merv to Herat, the most interesting is that which branches off from the road traversed by me at the Robat-Kungrueli ruins. From that point the road runs to Ak-Robat, a locality abounding in fresh water, which is obtained from wells at a depth of not more than seven feet. These wells may be dug almost anywhere and water will be obtained. The road then passes through Guilen (Gulran) and Chilime-Souz (Cheshma-Sebz), two streams yielding a plentiful supply of fresh water. The pass over the Barkhut range near Cheshma-Sebz is said to be of the same character as that at

Chombou. Beyond the pass one road leads to Kusan along a perfectly level country, and another to Shekivan over inconsiderable elevations. This road from Merv to Ak-Robat first runs along the River Murghab, then along the Kushk river to Chaman-i-baid. After this it strikes off in the direction of Ak-Robat, and passes the Islim Springs. By this route the Paropamisus Mountains are avoided, as is also the pass at the source of the Kushk River, which gave rise to the supposition that the road from Merv to Herat was impracticable for wheeled traffic on a large scale. The whole distance from Merv to Herat by this route is about 380 versts ($253\frac{1}{3}$ miles).'

Such was the information gained by this young Russian engineer, who by his intelligent exploration 'dissipated the fallacies which hitherto obscured the subject of a direct line of communication between Russia and India, and gave us for the first time a true contour sketch of the face of the country between Askabad and Herat.' As Sir Henry Rawlinson very truly remarked, 'the "great mountain chain" which, according to the optimist school, was to serve as a palladium for India, turns out—on the showing of M. Lessar—to be a mere paltry line of sandstone hills, not more than 1,000 feet in height, which could be crossed by a carriage-road in a couple of hours, and which would crumble before the touch of a Russian railway engineer.' The Paropamisus myth had been exploded, and, thanks to the energy of M. Lessar, the people of England at last

began to realise that there were no 'pathless deserts' or 'stupendous mountain ranges' between the Russian frontiers in Trans-Caspia and the British outposts in the Pishin Valley.

After having made this interesting and valuable discovery, Lessar proceeded to the Afghan town of Kusan, where he was hospitably received by the commandant of the fort, and thence he went eastwards to the fortress of Ghurian, forty miles west of Herat. There he had to remain for a couple of days until permission had been obtained from the Governor of Herat for him to cross over into Persia; but on May 12 he resumed his journey and marched through Khaf and Turbet-i-Haidari to Meshed. After a short rest there he once again moved towards the Afghan frontier, and marching along the main trade route between Meshed and Herat, through Turbet-i-Shaikh-Jam, reached the Heri-Rud at Pesh-Robat, whence he returned to Sarakhs and Askabad by the direct route which runs along the valley of the 'River of Herat.'

In the following September this young explorer travelled through Deregez; and, after making excursions in various directions between the Heri-Rud and Murghab rivers, he went from Sarakhs to Merv, where he was cordially received by the Tekkés. From thence he proceeded along the Oxus to Khiva, and returned to Askabad through Shaikh-Senem, Bala-Ishem, Kazi, and Durun. Even then he was not satisfied with his labours, and—filled with a spirit of restless energy—he in the

following month explored the country between Askabad and the Tejend Oasis, again visited Merv at the invitation of the Khan of the Sitchmaz tribe, and drew up careful reports of the various routes leading to that place from the Akhal Oasis; and finally, in November and December, he surveyed the mountainous districts of Kelat-i-Nadri and Deregez, and obtained complete information regarding the irrigation of the Atak country.¹

In addition to Alikhanoff and Lessar another Russian officer performed a very hazardous journey from Astrabad through Meshed, Merv, and Charjui to Tashkent. This explorer was Lieutenant Nazir Beg (or, as he was called in Russia, Naziroff), a Caucasian, who served under Skobeleff in the Alai expedition, and in 1878 went to Kabul as a topographer attached to Stolietoff's mission to the Court of the Amir Shere Ali. He, with two companions (one a Persian and the other a native of Baku), penetrated to Merv in disguise, thence went on to the Oxus, surveying *en route* the intervening desert; and having thus accomplished the object of his mission, he quietly rode on through Bokhara to Tashkent.

Thus by the close of the year 1882 the Russians had obtained complete information concerning the various routes from Askabad to Bokhara, and from the Aral Sea to the borders of Afghanistan; while, in addition to this, the independent

¹ From April to December 1882 M. Lessar travelled over 5,000 versts, and gained important information concerning the geography and political condition of the countries between Khiva and Herat.

Turkoman tribes gradually became accustomed to the presence of Russian visitors, and the way was thus prepared for further annexations.¹

In the meanwhile it had become evident that the Russian Government intended to dispute the Shah's claim to sovereign rights over the Atak Oasis; and, while they were protesting that they would not advance beyond their present positions, it was clear that they had resolved to keep open a sore on the Persian frontier in order that an excuse for a further advance might be available whenever a suitable opportunity arrived. This district had long formed an integral portion of the kingdom of Persia, and no one had ever dreamt of disputing a fact which was based on a long-continued occupation, and proved by the habitual payment of taxes by the inhabitants to

¹ Among the Tekké chieftains of Merv the one who at this time was most obdurate in his hostility towards the Russians was Makhdum Kuli Khan, who, with Tekmé Sirdar, had conducted the defence of Denghil Tepé in 1881. After the capture of that place Makhdum Kuli fled to Merv, and at first rejected all offers of friendship from the direction of Askabad. But when Alikhanoff visited Merv in February 1882 he found that this chief was already regretting that he had not followed Tekmé Sirdar's example in submitting to the Russians, whereby he lost a share in the benefits which had been conferred on his more discreet kinsman. He at that time made secret overtures to the Russian officer, and stated that he would like to visit Askabad, but feared that he might be punished for having led the defence of Denghil Tepé. Alikhanoff, after his return to Askabad, maintained close relations with Makhdum Kuli, and eventually, in the autumn of 1882, persuaded him to visit the Russian headquarters, where he took the oath of allegiance to the White Czar. By his submission the Russians got rid of their chief opponent, and from that time there was not much danger that they would have to storm the great fortress of Kaushut Khan in order to gain possession of the Merv Oasis.

the Shah's officers. But when the British Foreign Minister pointed out to the Russian Government that the Shah had an undoubted right to this district, and suggested that an arrangement should be arrived at between Russia and England, recognising this fact and determining the limits of Persia towards the northern deserts, the reply was made that 'the Russian Government could not acquiesce in the proposal made by Her Majesty's Government that the Atak country from Sarakhs to Baba Durmaz and between that line and the River Tejend should be handed over to the care and into the possession of Persia.'

Matters remained in this unsatisfactory state during the spring and summer months of 1883, the Persians being practically prohibited from exercising any control over the Atak Oasis, while Russian detachments moved at will throughout the district; and towards the close of the year General Komaroff,¹ the new governor of the Trans-Caspian district, sent a force of 1,000 infantry, 500 cavalry, and 10 guns to occupy the Tejend Oasis, while reinforcements were at the same time sent from Turkestan to Khiva to take part in the occupation of Merv as soon as a suitable occasion for such a step should arrive.

Nor was it long before such an opportunity was afforded by the embarrassment of the British Government on account of serious troubles in the Soudan. It was at this critical period—when the

¹ General Komaroff succeeded General Rohrberg in the spring of 1883.

Mahdist insurrection was spreading in the Eastern Soudan, when Baker Pasha's army had been grievously defeated near Trinkitat, and when Gordon was in difficulties at Khartoum—that the British Ambassador at St. Petersburg, on February 15, 1884, telegraphed to Lord Granville that His Imperial Majesty the Czar 'had determined to accept the allegiance which the representatives of the Merv Turkomans had sworn at Askabad, and to send an officer to administer the government of that region.' The time was well chosen. England's hour of trouble was Russia's opportunity, and this opportunity was not allowed to pass, even although the advantage was gained in direct violation of repeated pledges, and at the expense of the last remaining shred of any reputation which remained to Russia for honesty and straightforwardness in her dealings in Central Asia.

It will be well to explain briefly how this submission of the representatives of the Merv Turkomans had been brought about, and how Komaroff shortly afterwards took possession of the Oasis. As soon as it was decided that the fitting opportunity had arisen for striking the final blow Alikhanoff was again despatched to Merv with a small escort, and accompanied by Makhdum Kuli Khan. On arrival there he convened a public meeting and called upon the Mervis to beg for mercy and to submit to the rule of the White Czar, emphasising his demands by calling their attention to the force which had been assembled

in the Tejend Oasis, and hinting that it was merely the advanced guard of an army which was moving forward for the occupation of their country. Makhdum Kuli Khan apparently joined his exhortations to the threats of the Russian officer, and, as by this time there was a strong pro-Russian party in the oasis, Alikhanoff eventually persuaded some of the principal khans and elders to sign a document tendering their submission to Russia. This having been satisfactorily accomplished, the party returned to Askabad, accompanied by a deputation of four chiefs and twenty-four other notables, who, on the morning of February 12, 1884, took the oath of allegiance to the White Czar in the presence of General Komaroff.¹

A fortnight later General Komaroff left Askabad for the Tejend Oasis, accompanied by an escort of about 100 men, and shortly afterwards four other detachments, numbering in all some 800 men, were sent forward to Kari Bent. On arrival there the whole available force commenced its march on Merv, preceded by the chiefs who had just tendered their submission and who were sent on ahead

¹ General Komaroff announced the submission of the Merv Turkomans in a telegram to the Czar, dated February 12, 1884, of which the following is a translation: 'I have the honour of reporting to your Majesty that the khans of the four tribes of Merv Turkomans and twenty-four deputies, each representing 2,000 kubitkas, have this day, at Askabad, formally taken the oath of allegiance to your Majesty, for themselves and on behalf of all the people of Merv. The khans and representatives state that the Mervis have decided on this step being conscious of their inability to govern themselves and convinced that your Majesty's powerful Government alone is capable of establishing and consolidating order and prosperity in Merv.'

to prepare the way for the entry of the Russian troops. But there was still a strong party in the Oasis which objected to a Russian occupation, and as soon as it became known that a force was approaching for that purpose a multitude of armed Turkomans sallied out hoping to drive back the intruders. They, however, were too late, and, although some shots were fired and the advance was temporarily delayed, they had no time to organise a defence of their great fortified enclosure, and on the morning of March 16 the Russian column marched in and occupied the fortress of Kaushut Khan.

In this manner was Merv, 'The Queen of the World,' annexed to the Russian Empire; and it will be well to close this chapter of Russian intrigue and perfidy by quoting Marvin's opinion regarding this incident. He says: 'If Alikhanoff's diplomacy at Merv was shady, it was not one whit darker in hue than the diplomacy exercised by the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs at St. Petersburg. The annexation of Merv was deliberately planned by the Russian Government, and carried out in strict accordance with its orders. The *coup de main* was totally unprovoked by the Tekkés; it was done in violation of a whole series of solemn assurances to England; and the blow was struck in a treacherous and cowardly manner, dishonourable to a nation that had produced such a hard-hitting, fair-fighting hero as Skobelev.'¹

¹ *The Russians at the Gates of Herat*, by the late Mr. Charles Marvin.

CHAPTER XVIII

1884-1885

THE AFGHAN BOUNDARY QUESTION

Advantages to Russia from the occupation of Merv—The Afghan frontier—The Boundary Commission—Russia gaining time—Komaroff's intrigues—Uneasiness in England—Seizure of Pul-i-Khatum—Explanation of M. de Giers—The River Murghab—District of Panjdeh—Russian movements near the frontier—New Russian proposals—British counter-proposal rejected.

BEFORE describing the serious complications which followed the annexation of Merv, it will be well to briefly consider the effect which this occupation had on the general military position of the Russians in Central Asia.

While Cossack detachments were being pushed forward across the Kirghiz Steppes, and even until the capture of Samarkand, Russia had no footing on the south-eastern shores of the Caspian Sea. It is true that she held the island of Ashurada, and from time to time tried to gain a footing on the mainland in the neighbourhood of Gez; but these attempts were invariably frustrated by the determined opposition of the Shah's Government, supported as they were in this matter by Great Britain. Thus, though the Russian advances

through Khokand and Bokhara caused much anxiety in England, they in themselves did not constitute any very serious menace to India, because a Russian army advancing towards the Indus from that direction would have to cross the gigantic mountain range of the Hindu-Kush, and would even then be obliged to traverse difficult defiles before it could debouch into the plains of India, where it would be quite unfitted after its toilsome march to enter upon a series of great campaigns for the conquest of Hindustan.

But when the Russians occupied Krasnovodsk in 1869 they commenced a new movement which was of far greater danger, for they thereby seized the western extremity of a line of advance by which they could move towards Herat, Kandahar, and the lower Indus without encountering any such obstacles as would have to be traversed by an invading force moving from the direction of Turkestan. The full meaning of this new development was not at first realised; but when Skobelev conquered the Akhal Tekkés, and as soon as Lessar had exploded the Paropamisus myth, the people of England began to awake to a sense of the great danger which threatened India, and found that Russia was in a position to make an attack on their most prized possession from two different directions. But so long as Merv was unconquered, and remained in the possession of independent and hostile tribes, these two Russian armies (in Trans-Caspia and Turkestan) were unable to act together, separated as they were by some 200 miles of

independent territory; and thus in the event of a war with England Russia would at the outset have been obliged to undertake the conquest of Merv at a time when she could ill spare troops for such a purpose, or she would have been compelled to hold back a considerable portion of her available forces to protect her communications from the attacks which would undoubtedly have been made by the inhabitants of the oasis on the Murghab.

By the occupation of Merv, however, all this has been changed; the Turkestan troops then became available for use if necessary on the Herat-Kandahar line, and free and direct communication was obtained throughout the Russian provinces in Central Asia, from the Caspian Sea to the far-distant borders of China. Nor is this all: for, before Merv was annexed, reinforcements for the Turkestan army could only reach Tashkent by the tedious route from Orenburg to Kazala, or by the equally trying journey from Krasnovodsk to Khiva, and thence either to Kazala or up the Oxus; while now, Russian troops can be sent by the direct route through Askabad, Merv, and Charjui, whereby several weeks¹ are gained.

Thus the possession of Merv has strengthened the strategical position of Russia in Central Asia a hundredfold, and similar advantages have also resulted from a commercial point of view; for since

¹ Since the construction of the railway through Merv and Charjui to Samarkand the saving in time may be computed in months as compared with the old post route across the Kirghiz Steppes, or even by the shorter route through Khiva.

this direct trade route has been gained Central Asian cotton and other products can be easily transferred to the European markets, while cheap cotton fabrics and other Russian commodities can now be profitably conveyed to Central Asia for sale in the bazaars of Bokhara and the distant Ferghana Valley.

Such were the results which were to be expected from the Russian annexation of Merv. But although this step pointed clearly to an early and considerable increase of Russia's power for attacking India, the immediate source of danger was to be found in the sudden appearance of Russian troops in close proximity to the frontiers of Afghanistan at a point where those frontiers were imperfectly defined, and where there were, therefore, unlimited opportunities for further complications.

In the Anglo-Russian agreement of 1873 the territories and boundaries of that portion of the Amir's dominions which lies between the Oxus and the frontiers of Persia were defined in the following words: 'The internal districts of Akcha, Siripul, Maimana, Shiberghan, and Andkui, the latter of which would be the extreme Afghan frontier possession to the north-west, the *Desert* beyond belonging to independent tribes of Turkomans.' It will be seen that this definition of the north-western frontier of Afghanistan was by no means satisfactory, in that the chief border provinces were only mentioned, while the actual, or even approximate, northern limits of these districts were in no way specified. One point, however, was

clearly stated, and that is that the *Deserts* beyond the borders of these provinces belonged to the independent Turkomans, and by this it was clearly implied that the Afghan districts themselves comprised all the cultivated lands and pastures up to the southern edge of the deserts in question.

For years after this agreement was concluded it was generally understood, both in England and Russia, that this portion of the Afghan frontier ran in a nearly straight line from Khoja Sale on the Oxus to a point on the Persian frontier at, or in the immediate neighbourhood of, Sarakhs; the frontier was thus shown in English and Russian official maps; and the Czar's Government unquestionably accepted this interpretation of the clause of the agreement.

In order that there might be no mistake regarding this point, it is as well to mention that so lately as February 22, 1882, the Russian Ambassador in London informed Lord Granville that his Government acknowledged the validity of the agreement of 1873, and he also stated that, as that agreement 'was incomplete,' they were ready to supplement it by a settlement of the frontier of Afghanistan '*from the point where it had been left undefined*¹ *as far as Sarakhs*'; and again in the following April M. de Giers himself informed Sir E. Thornton that, 'in view of preventing disturbances on the borders of Afghanistan, he considered

¹ The Ambassador here meant Khoja Sale. East of Khoja Sale the northern frontier of Afghanistan is marked by the course of the River Oxus.

it to be of great importance that the boundary of that country *from Khoja Sale to the Persian frontier in the neighbourhood of Sarakhs should be formally and definitely laid down.*'

Thus it is evident from the words of the Russian Foreign Minister himself that until Merv had been occupied the Russian Government clearly understood and acknowledged that the north-western frontier of Afghanistan was marked by a line running from Khoja Sale to Sarakhs. But shortly after Merv had been annexed a new map was prepared by the Staff of the Russian army, wherein the boundary between Merv and Afghanistan was marked by a coloured line, which was drawn so as to meet the Heri-Rud at a point far to the south of Sarakhs. The first sign was thus given that the military party in Russia intended to contest the validity of the old recognised frontier; but even then, when the British Ambassador showed the map to M. de Giers, he was assured that it could not be considered as official,¹ as the boundary

¹ In addition to this map, a copy of which was sent to Lord Granville by the British Ambassador at St. Petersburg on March 26, another map of Asiatic Russia and the adjoining countries was published in the following May by the Military Topographical Department of the Russian Chief Staff Office; and in this later production, which was declared to be official, the frontiers of Persia and Afghanistan from Baba Durmaz to Khoja Sale were shown by a line traced in the following manner:—

From Baba Durmaz the north-eastern frontier of Khorassan followed the mountain range which forms the south-western boundary of the Atak Oasis, leaving Luftabad and Kelat-i-Nadiri to Persia, but depriving the Persians of control over the streams watering the Atak. The frontier then reached the Tejend River at a short distance to the north of the Persian fortress of Sarakhs,

line so drawn was not in accordance with the ideas which he had exchanged in conversation with the Russian Minister of War; and the Foreign Minister then added that the frontier would be, more or less, a line from Khoja Sale to Sarakhs, but he, on this occasion, qualified this remark by observing that there would, perhaps, be some deviations to the south so as to meet the mountain ridges.

In spite, therefore, of M. de Giers' continued assertion that the boundary would run from Khoja Sale to Sarakhs, it was plainly seen from the production of the map in question, and from the Russian Minister's reference to 'deviations to the south so as to reach the mountain ridges,' that the Russians intended to dispute the Amir's claim to certain lands to the south of the central portion of the old frontier line—i.e. on the banks of the Murghab river—and this belief received

and then, without crossing the river, followed the course of the stream up to a point about $18\frac{1}{2}$ miles north of Kusan, whence, leaving the river, it followed the ridge of the Paropamisus as far as the Pass of Ardevan, *about $16\frac{1}{4}$ miles to the north of Herat.*

The frontier, as shown on this map, then turned due north along the road leading to Merv, and crossing the Kushk at Chahil-Doktar it followed the right bank of that stream to within about $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles of Kala-i-Maur, and then, trending in an easterly direction, passed 9 miles to the *south* of Maruchak, 17 miles to the north of Maimana, 5 miles to the north of Andkhui, and finally reached the left bank of the River Oxus at Khoja Sale.

This *official* map appeared three weeks after Lord Granville had suggested that a Joint Commission should determine the principal points on the frontier, and it thus became perfectly clear from the earliest stage of the negotiations that Russia intended to insist on nothing less than a reconsideration of the whole question of the north-western frontier of Afghanistan.

confirmation in a well-authenticated report that Russian reinforcements had been despatched to Merv, and that Russian agents had been sent to tamper with the Sarik tribe of Turkomans who inhabit the oases of Yulatan and Panjdeh. The British Cabinet, therefore, decided that it would be advisable to accurately define the north-western frontier of Afghanistan with as little delay as possible, and Lord Granville accordingly, on April 29, 1884, informed the Russian Government that England was prepared to accept the proposal put forward in 1882—and since repeated by M. de Giers—for the delimitation of the frontier from Khoja Sale westwards, and suggested that the principal points on the boundary line should be laid down on the spot by a Joint Commission,¹ which should commence operations in the following autumn. After a short interchange of communications this proposal was approved by the Russians, and October 13, 1884, was named as the approximate date on which the two Commissioners were to meet at Sarakhs on the left bank of the Heri-Rud.

In accordance with this understanding, Major-General Sir Peter Lumsden was appointed British Commissioner for the delimitation of the Afghan

¹ Lord Granville in this note suggested that the Commission should include an Afghan representative; but the Russian Government objected to this, and it was eventually settled that an Afghan official should merely be attached to the Boundary Commission as an expert to furnish explanations on questions of detail and purely local matters whenever the Commissioners of the two great Powers might wish to consult him.

Boundary, several distinguished officers were attached to his staff, and arrangements were made for the despatch from India of a suitable escort of native troops. Sir Peter Lumsden and such members of his staff as were in England at the time left London early in September, so as to be at Sarakhs on the appointed date; but as the escort from India had to march by a long and imperfectly explored route through Beluchistan in order that there might be no possibility of complications with the fanatical Afghans, the Russian Government was informed on September 15 that Her Majesty's Commissioner would probably not reach Sarakhs before November 7. The Russian Government had in the meanwhile nominated General Zelenoi as their Commissioner, and at the end of September it was understood, both in England and Russia, that the Joint Commission would commence operations early in the following November.

But although the St. Petersburg authorities agreed to the principle that the frontier line should be definitely fixed by the officers thus appointed, they soon showed that they had no desire to have the question speedily settled, by entering into negotiations regarding trifling matters which both wasted time and retarded the commencement of the actual delimitation of the boundary.

Thus, although it was abundantly evident to the meanest intellect that the most important portion of the frontier was that lying between the Heri-Rud and Murghab rivers, and that it

was, therefore, desirable that this portion should be first defined in order that dangerous complications might not arise, the Russian Government nevertheless insisted that the demarcation of the frontier should be commenced at Khoja Sale, and that the Boundary Commissioners should work from east to west; and they only withdrew their objections after many valuable weeks had been wasted in the discussion of this point.

This, however, was but the commencement of the series of subterfuges by which the Muscovite diplomatists endeavoured to gain time until they had pushed forward reinforcements to Askabad and Merv, and had seized the most important points in the territory which they were determined to wrest from Afghanistan. A second example of this trickery will not be out of place. Although the Russian Government had consented to the appointment of boundary commissioners in the previous April, and had promised that their representative would be ready to meet Sir Peter Lumsden at Sarakhs in the following autumn, M. de Giers, on October 2, informed Sir E. Thornton that General Zelenoi would not be able to reach Sarakhs even by November 7; and he then proposed that, as owing to the severity of the climate nothing could be done till February, the Commissioners should meet on January 27, 1885. He at the same time objected to Sarakhs as the place of meeting, and suggested that some other place farther towards the south, such as Pul-i-Khatun, should be

agreed upon instead.¹ General Zelenoi had been seized with a convenient indisposition, and was therefore unable to study the question or to receive his instructions until it was too late for him to join Sir Peter Lumsden before the commencement of winter.

In the meanwhile the British Commissioner and his escort from India were hastening towards the borders of the Herat Province.² General

¹ As the British Government objected to changing the locality at which the Commissioners should meet, M. de Giers on October 21 once again agreed to their commencing work at Sarakhs.

² Mr. Condie Stephen, C.B., C.M.G., and Captain A. F. Barrow, of the Bengal Staff Corps, accompanied Sir Peter Lumsden from England; and on his way to Sarakhs he was joined by Colonel C. E. Stewart, C.I.E.

The Indian contingent consisted of 4 British officers and 200 men of the 11th Bengal Lancers, and 3 British officers and 250 sepoys of the 20th Punjaub Infantry. The cavalry were under the command of Major W. I. Bax, and the infantry were commanded by Major W. Meiklejohn.

The following staff officers also accompanied the mission:—

1. Lieutenant-Colonel (now Sir West) Ridgeway, who acted as Assistant Commissioner to Sir Peter Lumsden, and subsequently became Chief Boundary Commissioner,

2. Captain E. L. Durand	} Political officers.
3. Captain C. E. Yate	
4. Mr. W. K. Merk, C.S.	
5. Captain F. de Laessoe	
6. Major T. H. Holdich, R.E.	} Survey officers.
7. Captain St. G. C. Gore, R.E.	
8. Lieutenant the Hon. M. G. Talbot, R.E.	
9. Captain P. J. Maitland	} Intelligence
10. Captain W. Peacocke, R.E.	
11. Surgeon-Major J. E. T. Aitchison, C.I.E.	Naturalist.
12. Surgeon W. Owen, C.I.E.	} Medical officers.
13. Surgeon R. H. Charles	
14. Mr. C. L. Griesbach	Geologist.

The contingent left Quetta, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Ridgeway, on September 22, and marching *via* Nushki,

Lumsden reached Sarakhs on November 8, to find that the Russians had not only established themselves in the neighbourhood of Old Sarakhs, on the right bank of the Heri-Rud, but had also seized Pul-i Khatun, some forty miles higher up the stream, while a similar advance was made on the Murghab, through Yulatan, towards Panjdeh. The true meaning of Zelenoi's supposed illness and of the Russian desire to commence the delimitation of the frontier at Khoja Sale then became clearly apparent. The Muscovites had been trying to gain time in order that a sufficient force could be assembled for the purpose of seizing the chief avenues leading to Herat; the necessary delay had been obtained by the various pretexts which had been put forward by the Russian Government, and then the mask was cast aside and Russia once more appeared before the world in her true character.

When Komaroff visited Merv in March 1884 agents were at once sent southward to Yulatan and Panjdeh for the purpose of obtaining the submission of the Sarik Turkomans who inhabited those places. The result of this action

Galicha, Khwaja-Ali (on the Helmund), Kala-i-Fath, Kala-Kin, and Zighin, reached Kusan on November 17, having thus traversed 767 miles in 57 days, which gives an average day's march of $13\frac{1}{2}$ miles.

By this march it was proved that another fairly easy line of advance was available for an army moving towards the Lower Indus from the direction of Herat, and one additional proof was thus given—if such were necessary—of the danger which would inevitably result from a Russian occupation of the Herat Valley.

was that the people of Yulatan sent a deputation to Askabad in the following May, and there swore allegiance to Russia before Prince Dondoukoff-Korsakoff, the Governor-general of the Caucasus, who was making a journey to the Akhal and Merv Oases.¹ Their kinsmen at Panjdeh, however, held aloof, for they had long been the subjects of the Amir of Kabul, and, having no desire to become the vassals of the White Czar, they dismissed the Russian agent with the declaration that they owed allegiance to the Amir Abdur Rahman Khan.

Having thus commenced fresh intrigues among the Sariks on the Murghab, Komaroff himself started off from Merv with fifty Cossacks and some Tekké horsemen, and went to the small Persian fort at Old Sarakhs, on the right bank of the Heri-Rud, and some seven miles from the Persian fortress of the same name which stands on the left bank of the river. There he found a garrison of forty Persian soldiers, whom he unceremoniously ordered out of the place; and, having proclaimed that the district was Russian soil, he left a Russian detachment in possession, and made his way back to Askabad.

When news of this fresh movement reached England the greatest uneasiness prevailed for a

¹ At this time also M. Lessar went to Yulatan, and then, pushing southwards along the banks of the Murghab, visited Panjdeh, from whence he travelled up the Kushk Valley as far as Chaman-i-baid. There he turned westward to Ak-Robat, and, skirting the salt lakes of Yer-Oilan, returned through Koyun-kui to Yulatan.

short time, until it was stated that the Persian fortress on the left bank of the Heri-Rud had not been interfered with, that the Russians had no intention of going there, and that as for Old Sarakhs, which had been occupied by Komaroff, it was nothing but a mass of ruins, and was a place of but little importance. The fact was ignored that the value of the district consisted not in the strength of any wretched Persian fort which existed therein, but in the strategical importance of the locality itself to an army moving from Askabad towards Herat.

However, although Merv, Old Sarakhs, and Yulatan had all become Russian possessions, none of these districts were to the south of the old recognised frontier line extending from Sarakhs to Khoja Sale; and it was not until the Russians made their next move in 'the game of grab' that the full significance of their designs became apparent. This move was the sudden seizure of Pul-i-Khatun and the advance of Russian detachments towards Panjdeh, while Sir Peter Lumsden was journeying towards Sarakhs, and while the Russian Government were raising obstacles to the early commencement of the demarcation of the boundary.

General Lumsden first heard of these movements when he reached Meshed on October 31, and he at once reported the matter to Lord Granville; but it was not until he had reached Sarakhs a few days later that he received confirmation of the report from an Afghan officer who

had been sent, with an escort of 100 horsemen, to meet him at that place. He then also heard that General Komaroff was at Old Sarakhs, personally directing the movements of the Russian detachments; but as the Governor of Akhal, with a remarkable want of courtesy, at once made arrangements to leave, to avoid meeting the British Commissioner, Mr. Condie Stephen was sent to inquire whether the Russians had thus advanced into Afghan territory by order of the Czar, and he obtained the reply that Pul-i-Khatun had been occupied as an outpost in accordance with instructions received from Prince Dondoukoff-Korsakoff.

Now, in forming an estimate of the true character of this movement on Pul-i-Khatun it must be borne in mind that in 1882 the Russian Government proposed that the north-western frontier of Afghanistan should be accurately defined from Khoja Sale ‘*as far as Sarakhs* ;’ that on March 26, 1884—or some six months before this violation of the Amir’s dominions took place—M. de Giers had again declared that ‘the boundary would be, more or less, a line from Khoja Sale to *Sarakhs*, with, perhaps, some deviations to the south so as to reach the mountains ;’ that it had been arranged that the Boundary Commission should meet at Sarakhs, as that place was at one end of the frontier line ; and that ever since January 1873, and until the summer of 1884, Sarakhs had been recognised by both the British and the Russian Governments as the point in the neighbourhood of

which the frontier line of Afghanistan should meet that of Persia.¹

By this sudden occupation, however, all these previous understandings were set aside, and, because Great Britain was embarrassed elsewhere, the Cossacks were pushed forward to a point some forty miles south of the locality which had been repeatedly mentioned by M. de Giers and other members of the Russian Government as forming the extreme western extremity of the Afghan boundary. M. de Giers endeavoured to explain away this unwarranted act of aggression by stating that as Russia 'had succeeded in establishing tranquillity in the Turkoman Steppes, she was forced to seek means to consolidate the state of affairs thus created, and to take steps against the disorders which there was every reason to apprehend in consequence of the considerable military preparations of the Afghans on the northern border of Herat and the approach of the British escort, the numbers of which greatly exceeded what had been agreed upon.'² He, however, declared that it

¹ It was only in December 1884 that the British Government were definitely informed that Russia decided to abandon the idea that Sarakhs should form the western terminus of the frontier line. In the previous May, however, the official map was published, showing the frontier line drawn from a point close to Kusan, and that date therefore has been taken as the time when Russia first showed signs of upsetting the previous understanding.

² In August 1884 Sir E. Thornton was informed that the strength of the Russian escort would consist of from 200 to 250 Cossacks, depending on the strength of the sotnias, and it was apparently understood that the British escort should be of similar strength. As the troops from India had, however, to march through an imperfectly explored country, exposed to the possible

would be quite impossible to withdraw the detachment, and the Russians thus remained in possession.

It is almost superfluous to point out the absurdity of the reasons given in defence of this step by the Russian Foreign Minister; for if the Russians were to mass troops on the borders of Asiatic Turkey, would the Governor-General of the Caucasus be justified in seizing Erzeroum or Bayazid because the Porte commenced military preparations to safeguard its frontiers from the threatened attack? Or can it be for one moment maintained that Russia was justified in seizing a portion of Afghan territory merely because the Turkomans on the border might possibly be filled with alarm on hearing of the approach of a few sepoys and sowars from India? No: M. de Giers' explanation of this movement was the best he had to give; and its very absurdity proves the weakness of the Russian case.

Leaving the Russians thus established at Old Sarakhs and Pul-i-Khatun on the Heri-Rud, it is necessary now to explain the situation on the Murghab at the time when Sir Peter Lumsden reached Sarakhs and received reports that a Russian detachment had pushed up the banks of that river in the direction of Panjdeh.

attacks of fanatical tribesmen, the Indian authorities fixed the number of the escort at 200 cavalry and 250 infantry, as being the smallest party which could be despatched in safety. The numbers were at once sent to the Russian Government for their information; but they did not fail to make capital out of the matter, as has been seen.

The river Murghab, which waters the Merv Oasis and then disappears in the sands of the Kara-Kum Desert, takes its rise in the mass of mountains which connects the eastern extremities of the Safed-Koh and Tir-Band-i-Turkestan ranges, and, flowing in a westerly direction through the great valley separating those mountain-chains, it, after receiving the waters of numerous tributaries, turns towards the north-west, and passes the Afghan fortress of Bala Murghab and the post of Karawal Khana. At this latter point it receives the waters of the Kaisar affluent, and, continuing in a north-westerly direction, flows past the Afghan fort of Maruchak¹ (on the right bank), and Panjdeh,² and Ak Tepé (both on the left bank). At Ak Tepé it is joined by the Kushk river, which rises in the Paropamisus range, and from this point the Murghab runs in a due northerly

¹ The Kashan stream joins the Murghab at a short distance below Maruchak.

² There are two places of this name, viz. Old Panjdeh and New Panjdeh. The former, which at this time was a mere collection of ruins, was built by a Hazara chieftain, named Bumyad Khan, on the left bank of the Murghab, at a distance of some twelve miles below the Bund-i-Nadri. About two miles further down stream, and at about the same distance from the river, is situated New Panjdeh, which was built by the Sariks some time between 1875 and 1880. It was a great inclosure or fort, the ramparts consisting of two walls a few paces apart, with the intervening space filled up with earth so that they might resist artillery fire. It was of sufficient size to enable the whole of the population of the oasis to take refuge in it, in case of attack; but there were no houses inside, and the people generally lived in reed-huts or felt-tents in the vicinity. Such is the description of Panjdeh, as given by Colonel Stewart in March 1884, before the Afghan frontier troubles commenced.

direction past Yulatan to Merv, and thence into the desert.

The undulating country between the Murghab and Heri-Rud, and extending from the northern slopes of the Paropamisus range to the desert, is called Badghis—a well-favoured district, covered with grass and groves of pistachio and mulberry trees, wild rose and blackberry bushes, and watered by numerous rivulets. In early times this district of Badghis, which has always been connected with the Herat Province, included the oasis of Yulatan, but, at a later period of its history, the tract of cultivation between Panjdeh and Yulatan remained fallow, and, beyond the traces of early canals, presents no vestige of former occupation, and has become a desert. One of the most important portions of Badghis is the Panjdeh district, which is watered by an extensive system of canals issuing from a dam called the Bund-i-Nadri, which was thrown across the Murghab at a short distance below the Afghan fort of Maruchak. The most direct road from Merv to Herat runs along the banks of the Murghab as far as Ak Tepé—at the junction of the Kushk and Murghab rivers, just to the north of Panjdeh—and then, following the valley of the Kushk, crosses the Paropamisus range by either of the passes of Ardevan or Baba. Thus, Panjdeh is a most important strategical point which must be held by a force advancing on Herat from Merv, and its value to the Russians is increased by the fact that it covers the left flank of an army marching from Askabad by the easier

routes, along the Heri-Rud and viâ the Chombou Pass.

The district of Panjdeh, which comprises the country between the Kushk and Murghab rivers from the Bund-i-Nadri to Ak Tepé, was formerly subdivided into five zones or parishes, and from this circumstance its name of the 'Five Villages' was derived. It, together with the other portions of Badghis, formed a part of the Herat Province ever since Afghanistan became a kingdom; and even when the old empire of Ahmed Shah became split up under the feeble rule and divided councils of his descendants, Badghis and Panjdeh still remained linked to Herat, and their inhabitants looked on the ruler of that province as their master. In former times, and during the first quarter of the present century, Panjdeh was occupied by the Jamshidis or Hazaras, according as the Jamshidi chief at Kushk or the Hazara ruler of Kala Nau was at the time most powerful or the most in favour at Herat. Towards the close of that period, however, some Turkomans of the Ersari tribe—whose settlements are scattered along the banks of the Oxus, between Charjui and Balkh—moved to Panjdeh, and obtained permission to settle there on payment of a regular tax to the Afghan authorities.

At this time Merv was occupied by the Sarik tribe of Turkomans, who were in some slight degree subject to the Khans of Khiva; and the country in the neighbourhood of Old Sarakhs (on the Heri-Rud) was inhabited by the Salor tribe.

In the year 1832, however, Prince Abbass Mirza of Persia, as has been mentioned in a previous chapter, attacked the Salor fortress at Old Sarakhs, and, having overcome the resistance of the Turkomans, slaughtered a large number of the defenders and carried off some 5,000 prisoners. The Khan of Khiva then offered to ransom the captives, and the Persian Crown Prince consented to liberate them on receipt of 50,000 toman, on the understanding that the people of the tribe undertook to prevent the Tekkés and Sariks from raiding into Khorassan; or, if they were unable to do so, that they should, at all events, give timely notice of any threatened 'alaman,' or foray. During this troublous period many of the Salors fled to Merv and Yulatan, while a few other families settled at Panjdeh on the same conditions as the Ersaris; and for some years after this the Ersari and Salor settlers at Panjdeh paid tribute to the Herat authorities, either through an Afghan naib, or deputy-governor, who resided among them, or through the Hazara chief of Kala Nau.

In 1857, however, the Ersaris withdrew, and returned to the settlements of their tribesmen on the banks of the Oxus; and at the same time the Salors were attacked by the Sariks, driven out of Merv and Yulatan, and forced to seek refuge near Zurabad, on the left bank of the Heri-Rud, while many families also fled to Panjdeh. Soon after this the Sariks were themselves forced to leave the Merv country by their more powerful neighbours, the Tekkés, and, moving southwards, they occupied

Yulatan and Panjdeh, and compelled the Salor families to migrate from the latter place to the banks of the Heri-Rud.

Although the district of Panjdeh had from time to time been occupied by various tribes who fled there to obtain safety from their enemies, yet, in spite of these frequent changes, the inhabitants of the district—whether Jamshidis, or Hazaras, or Sariks, or Salors—invariably acknowledged that they were on Afghan soil, and nearly always paid revenue in some form or other to the Afghan Government. Being nothing better than savages, who delighted in violence, and whose chief occupation consisted in making forays into the neighbouring countries for the purpose of carrying off slaves, it cannot be wondered at that their payments of revenue to the Afghan officials were made in an irregular manner. When there were troubles in Afghanistan they paid little, and at times even paid nothing; but when there was a strong ruler in Kabul they paid a regular tax, and although they always tried to pay as little as possible, they still acknowledged their liability to pay a land tax of $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of their agricultural produce, and one in forty of their cattle.¹ They occasionally even supplied troops to the Afghan Government,

¹ On April 9, 1884, Colonel Stewart reported as follows:— ‘I have ascertained that the revenue actually collected last year by the Afghan authorities from the Turkomans of Panjdeh was 13,000 krans. A kran is worth about ninepence.’ Thus it will be seen that the Turkomans of Panjdeh paid about 487*l.* to the Afghans during the year immediately preceding that in which Merv was annexed by Russia. At this time there were some 4,000 tents in the district, representing a population of about 16,000 souls.

and so long as they paid a little to show their acknowledgment of Afghan rights, they were left alone by the frontier officials, who looked upon them as a convenient barrier against the more powerful and turbulent clans further to the north.

The Governor of Herat generally posted a Naib, or Deputy-Governor, at Panjdeh to collect taxes, and to represent the central government; and in 1883, and up till the time when Merv was occupied by the Russians, the Afghan representative there was Mir Osman Khan. He, however, returned to Herat in February 1884 to report that the Sariks would only pay a portion of the revenue due from them, and the Governor of Herat then wrote to Yaluntash Khan, the Jamshidi Chief of Bala Murghab, reminding him that Panjdeh was under his orders, and ordering him to make the best settlement he could; and two months later, when a Russian agent visited Panjdeh, the Sariks wrote to Yaluntash Khan begging that someone in authority might again be placed at Panjdeh to prevent Russians visiting the place, as they would be unable to do so without Afghan assistance.

From the above facts it will be seen that the district of Badghis, and its most important portion, Panjdeh, had long been under Afghan rule. During the first quarter of this century Panjdeh was occupied by the Jamshidis or Hazaras, both of which are undoubtedly Afghan tribes; and although during the last seventy years the district was inhabited by various Turkoman tribes, still these always acknowledged that they had settled

in Afghan territory, they as a general rule paid some tax in recognition of this fact, and an Afghan Deputy-Governor generally resided among them as the representative of the Afghan Governor of Herat.

Such being the case—and these facts have been established beyond doubt—it was only natural that the Amir of Kabul should have taken steps to vindicate his sovereign rights over the Panjdeh district as soon as it became known that the Russians had occupied Merv and had begun to tamper with his subjects on the Murghab. Troops were pushed forward to Maimana and Bala Murghab in April 1884, and by the commencement of the following June an Afghan garrison occupied Panjdeh and took possession of Ak Tepé, where they began the construction of a fort on the huge tumulus at the junction of the Kushk and Murghab rivers which gives its name to the locality ('White Hill').

As soon as the Russian Government heard of this movement on the part of the Afghans, they at once protested against the despatch of Afghan troops to Panjdeh, and disputed the Amir's claim to that place on the ground that it did not form a portion of the territories of the kingdom of Kabul which were actually in possession of the Amir Shere Ali, and that it therefore was not included within the boundaries of Afghanistan as fixed by the agreement of 1873. They invited the attention of the British Government to the fact that it was only in consequence of the engagement which Great

Britain had entered into to use all its influence to prevent the Amir of Afghanistan from committing aggressions that they had ultimately agreed to the limitary line as set forth in the agreement of 1873; and as it had been arranged that the delimitation of the frontier should be carried out in accordance with the terms of that agreement, they expressed a hope that the Amir would be led to understand that the best guarantee for the security of his possessions was to be found 'not in the extension of his own possessions, but much more in a friendly understanding between the two Great Powers.'

From the preceding account of the Panjdeh district and its various inhabitants, it will be seen that the Russian Government were incorrect in their statement that Panjdeh did not form a portion of Afghanistan during the reign of Shere Ali. Although Afghan troops had not been permanently located there, the Turkoman settlers had nevertheless always recognised the Amir's sovereignty, and Shere Ali's authority in particular was upheld by a Naib named Kafar Beg, who was placed in charge of the district by the young Governor of Herat, Yakooob Khan. The fact that the Afghans had not permanently maintained a garrison in Panjdeh was no proof that the district was independent of Afghanistan, and afforded no reason why the Amir should not have sent troops there whenever he desired to do so; for if a permanent garrison is to be considered as the only true test of possession, there are no frontiers in the world which could not be violated on similar grounds.

Panjdeh had been Afghan territory for a long course of years, and Russia knew it, and acknowledged it in the reign of Shere Ali, and to that very Amir himself; for when Stolietoff visited Kabul in 1878 for the purpose of concluding an offensive and defensive alliance with the Amir Shere Ali, one of his requests was that the Russians should be permitted to construct a road 'to Herat *via* the Hamun River (Oxus), the plain of Indkho (Andhkui), Bala Murghab, Maruchak, Pandi (Panjdeh) and Firoz Koh.'¹ If Panjdeh did not belong to Shere Ali, why did Stolietoff ask the Amir's permission to construct a road through that district? When it suited Russia's purpose, she acknowledged that Panjdeh was an Afghan possession; but when times had changed, and she found it to be to her advantage to call black white and to dispute facts, she found that she was well served by men who had frequently played the same game on previous occasions, and thus the Afghan Panjdeh of 1878 became in 1885 a district which had never been an Afghan possession and had never belonged to the Amir Shere Ali!

For some months after the Afghan occupation of the Panjdeh district nothing occurred on the Murghab to disturb the peace in that portion of the frontier. The Russians knew that their forces at Merv and in the Akkal Oasis were insufficient to enable them to make an attempt to expel the Afghan garrison which had established itself in the

¹ See Correspondence respecting Central Asia. No. 1 (1878), p. 159.

angle between the Kushk and Murghab streams; they were therefore compelled to wait till reinforcements arrived from Turkestan and the Caucasus, and, above all, they considered it to be advisable to ascertain if the British escort would be permitted to march to Herat without molestation, or whether, as many Russians believed, the Afghans would display their hostility towards the English by attacking Colonel Ridgeway's party during its long and difficult journey.

But while the Russians were thus waiting for reinforcements and watching for the commencement of complications between the English and Afghans, Komaroff and his restless lieutenant, Alikhanoff, utilised the interval by despatching small parties along the Murghab, to obtain information regarding the strength and position of the Afghan garrison at Panjdeh, and to secure a footing in the valley to the south of Yulatan. These movements commenced in September 1884 by the despatch of an officer with a small escort of Turkoman horsemen, who, under the plea of hunting for medicinal herbs, wandered about the valley, and continued his explorations until required to leave by the Afghan commandant. This reconnaissance—for such it undoubtedly was—was followed early in November by the despatch of another officer with a party of Russian troopers, and on this occasion the intruders advanced several miles beyond Yulatan, and established a small supply dépôt at a place called Sanduk-Kuchan, some ten miles to the north of Sari Yazı.

Such was the state of affairs when Sir Peter Lumsden reached Sarakhs on November 8, 1884. The situation was full of danger; the excitement among the border tribes was increasing in consequence of the delay in the arrival of the Russian commissioner, and because of the gradual approach of Russian troops towards the Afghan outposts, whilst the possibility of a satisfactory settlement of the boundary question was daily becoming more remote on account of the bitter feelings which were rapidly arising both in England and Russia. It seemed almost as if the question of peace or war was to be dependent on the discretion of the Russian and Afghan outpost commanders, and in this emergency Sir Peter Lumsden hastened from Sarakhs to Kusan, and, after meeting the Indian contingent at that place, he proceeded with an escort of fifty horsemen to Panjdeh.

On reaching Ak Tepé¹ the general was received with great cordiality by the chief and elders of the Sarik Turkomans, by Yaluntash Khan, chief of the Jamshidis, and by his brother, Aminullah Khan, while General Ghaus-ud-din Khan, the Afghan commandant, came out to meet him at the head

¹ Lumsden describes Ak Tepé in the following words:— 'Ak Tepé, which covers the northern approaches to Panjdeh, is a natural mound in the centre of the valley with a command of some 100 feet above the surrounding country, but itself commanded from heights across the Murghab at a distance of some 1,200 yards. It has at some time been built over and used as a fort, and the Afghan troops were busy at work intrenching the whole position, which is a strong one, except against artillery.'

of his troops, and caused a salute to be fired in his honour. He there found that the inhabitants and Afghan officials had been thrown into a great state of alarm by fresh movements of the Russian troops in the valley of the Murghab. It appears that as soon as the British Commissioner left Sarakhs for Kusan, Alikhanoff set off post-haste for Merv, and taking with him 150 horsemen, moved through Yulatan to the ruins of Hazret Imam, where he formed a junction with General Komaroff, who had previously arrived at that place with 300 troopers from Sarakhs.¹ News of this movement reached Panjdeh on November 18, when Ghaus-ud-din at once reported the matter to the Governor of Herat, and ordered up reinforcements from Maruchak and Bala Murghab. Yaluntash Khan immediately responded to the call, and starting off with 400 infantry and 200 horsemen, arrived at Panjdeh on the 22nd, to find, however, that the danger had passed away, and that the Russians had once again retired toward the north.

Moving from Hazret Imam along the bank of the river, the Russians—led, be it remembered, by the Governors of the Trans-Caspian district and of Merv—occupied Aimak Jar on November 21, from which place General Komaroff suddenly returned towards Merv, while Alikhanoff continued his advance, after he had sent a trooper on ahead to inform Ghaus-ud-din of his desire for an interview. The Afghan commander, thereupon, sent a messenger to state that he should have received

¹ Komaroff left Merv on November 10.

earlier intimation that a meeting was desired, and informed the Russian officer that if he waited where he was the interview would be promptly accorded. Alikhanoff, however, would not halt, but insisted on moving forward in spite of the repeated protests of the Afghan officials; and it was only when he had arrived within a short distance of the Afghan position that he eventually was forced to halt by the receipt of a distinct warning that any further advance would be made at his peril. He then addressed a most insulting and provocative letter to the Afghan Commandant, and after waiting for a reply, in which Ghaus-ud-din boldly drew attention to the treachery of his proceedings, he, on the following morning, retraced his steps towards Merv.

In consequence of these threatening demonstrations on the part of the Russians, General Ghaus-ud-din Khan sent a small picquet to Sari Yazî for the purpose of obtaining timely warning of any further movements against his position at Ak Tepé. In taking this step he merely did what any good soldier in his position would have done under similar circumstances, for he knew that the Russians were gradually concentrating troops at Merv, and from the advance of armed reconnaissance parties along the Murghab Valley towards Panjdeh he had good grounds for believing that a serious attack was about to be made against his position in the Panjdeh district. Had he taken no steps to secure his troops from a surprise he would have been guilty of gross dereliction of duty, and

so long as he did not cross the recognised frontier of Afghanistan he was perfectly justified in establishing an outpost well in advance of his main position. Sari Yazı was within the frontier of Afghanistan as generally understood both in England and Russia at that time,¹ and the establishment of an Afghan picquet at that place cannot therefore be considered to constitute a reasonable excuse for the Russian advance which took place soon afterwards.

After the Afghans took possession of Sari Yazı the Russians made no further advances for the next two months, and the chief interest in the Boundary Question once more became centred in the negotiations which were being carried on between London and St. Petersburg. On October 13, 1884, Sir E. Thornton had an interview with General Zelenoi and M. Zinovieff, the Head of the Asiatic Department in the Russian Foreign Office, when the Russian officers stated that they feared that the Boundary Commission would result in failure unless a zone should be first agreed upon between the two Governments within which the Commissioners should be instructed to consider

¹ Even Alikhanoff, the Governor of Merv, acknowledged that Sari Yazı was at all events not beyond the Afghan frontier, for on November 10, 1884, Sir Peter Lumsden reported that he had had an interview on that day with Alikhanoff, on which occasion the Russian officer, after a long conversation, informed him that 'the boundary between Yulatan and Panjdeh was at Sari Yazı on the Murghab.' See also the statements made by Lord Granville and Lord Edmund Fitzmaurice on March 3, 1885, that the Zulfikar Pass, Ak-Robat, Sari Yazı, and Pul-i-khisti were all within Afghan territory.

where the north-western boundary of Afghanistan might lie, and outside of which they should not extend their explorations. This suggestion was in itself a reasonable one, but when the Russian Government some six weeks later (November 26) defined what they considered should be the northern and southern limits of the proposed zone, the extravagance of their proposal at once became evident, for not only did they suggest that the northern boundary of the zone should start from Daulatabad—a point on the Heri-Rud at some distance to the south of Sarakhs—but they also proposed that the southern limit should be formed by a line following the crests of the Paropamisus Range as far as the Ardevan Pass, and thence past Bala Murghab and Andkhui to Khoja Sale.¹

In spite of the one-sidedness of this suggestion the British Cabinet, in their desire to arrive at a peaceful solution of the difficulty, accepted the northern limit of the zone proposed by Russia, but they refused to agree to any southern limit, as they did not wish on the one hand to fetter the freedom of the action of the Commission in districts as to the possession of which real doubts might be found to exist, nor, on the other hand, did they desire to imply even a possibility of doubt as to the rights of the Amir of Afghanistan over the districts so far south as the southern line proposed by Russia.

It is unnecessary to enter into an account of

¹ This southern limit ran some miles to the south of Zulfikar and Maruchak, and approached to within sixteen miles of the city of Herat.

the subsequent negotiations regarding this question of a zone within which the Commission was to limit its investigations, and it is sufficient merely to state that the Russian Government eventually declined to send their Commissioner to the Afghan frontier until the matter had been settled; and as the British Cabinet refused to accept their extravagant demands, they, on January 28, 1885, proposed a definite frontier-line on the condition that the Afghans should not erect fortifications between the line so proposed and the crest of the Paropamisus Range. The memorandum containing this new suggestion was conveyed to England by M. Lessar, and from that time the discreet young railway engineer took a prominent part in the negotiations.

The line thus suggested was defined by M. de Giers in the following words:¹—

‘Starting from a point on the right bank of the Heri-Rud situated at a distance of about ten versts south of Zoulfagar, the line would run by Kehrizi-Elias and Kehrizi-Soumé to the rivulet of Yegri-Gueuk, — would follow the crest of the heights which fringe the right bank of this rivulet as far as the ruins of Tchemenibid, and then the chain of hills from the right bank of the Kouschk as far as Havuzi Khan, whence it would run to

¹ It is interesting to note the exact wording of the proposal, because this boundary-line, which was rejected as such by the Gladstonian Cabinet in March, 1885, was, with the exception of a slight modification at its western extremity, precisely the same as the frontier-line which was eventually accepted by that Ministry after the Russians attacked and defeated the Afghans at Panjdeh.

a point situated to the north of Meruchak, which would be left to Afghanistan. From this point the line of frontier would follow the crest of the heights which to the north border the valley of Kaïsor, and to the west that of Sangalak, and leaving Andkhoï to the east, it would reach Khoja Sale on the Amou-Daria.’¹

This suggestion meant nothing more nor less than that the British Government should agree, without a preliminary investigation on the spot, that Russia should appropriate Panjdeh and the other districts to the north of the proposed boundary-line, in spite of the fact that those districts were claimed as portions of Afghanistan, and although it had been previously arranged that the true frontier should be laid down by Commissioners nominated by the two Governments. It cannot be wondered at, therefore, that on the 13th of the following March Lord Granville informed the Russian Ambassador in London that Her Majesty’s Government were unable to agree to the proposed frontier-line, or to the conditions annexed to it, as, from the information in their possession, the true line of Afghan boundary would run from Shir Tepé on the Heri-Rud to Sari Yazî on the Murghab, and thence along the skirts of the cultivation of Maimana and Andkhui to Khoja Sale. He, however, stated that the British Cabinet still adhered to their opinion that the boundary should be traced on the spot by the British and Russian

¹ See ‘Further Correspondence respecting Central Asia.’ No. 2 of 1885, pp. 148, 165.

Commissioners, and with this view they were prepared to agree that the frontier-line proposed by Russia should form the southern limit of the zone of investigation; the northern limit being the above-mentioned line from Shir Tepé to Sari Yazí, and thence to Khoja Sale.

It will be seen that in making this counter-proposal the British Government, in their intense anxiety to avoid war, really assented to a possible and most probable curtailment of the territories which they believed to belong to Afghanistan. For many years, as has been repeatedly mentioned, the true north-western frontier of Afghanistan was considered, both in Russia and England, to be a line running from Sarakhs to Khoja Sale. But, in spite of this fact, the British Cabinet first agreed to abandon Sarakhs and to consent to a zone of investigation which should be limited to the north by a line running from Daulatabad through Hazret Imam. By this concession it was made evident that they would accept some frontier-line which at all events would not be to the north of those two places, and would, therefore, be more advantageous to Russia than the old Sarakhs-Khoja Sale boundary. But this would not satisfy the Muscovites. Their outposts were gradually pushed southwards; and then, after their troops had seized important positions in the debated territory, and after several months spent in negotiations, England made further concessions by placing the northern limit of the zone still more to the south, and at the same time suggesting that the

southern limit should be the line extending from a point six miles to the south of Zulfikar, past Karez Sumbha and Maruchak to Khoja Sale.

Throughout these negotiations not one word was said—as might very reasonably have been done—of extending the zone of investigation to the north of the old Sarakhs-Khoja Sale line, and the British Government honestly adhered to the spirit of their former agreements by making no suggestion that the inquiry of the Commissioners should extend over any portion of the country to the north of that line. With the Russians, however, the case was different. As soon as Merv was annexed they disputed the old-recognised frontier, and the more the English conceded the more extravagant became their demands; and thus Lord Granville's last proposal of March 13 was rejected by the Russian Foreign Office, and the British Government was plainly given to understand that if they wished that the Russian Commissioner should meet Sir Peter Lumsden, a further concession would have to be made by their acceptance of the definite frontier-line proposed in the Russian memorandum of January 28, 1885.

The despatch containing this rejection of Lord Granville's proposal was written on March 27, and three days later a serious collision occurred between the Russian and Afghan troops on the Murghab, which renders it necessary that the military movements on the Afghan frontier should once more be considered.

CHAPTER XIX

1884-1887

THE PANJDEH INCIDENT, AND DEMARCATION OF THE
BOUNDARY

A new move towards Herat—Fresh Russian assurances—Russian advance and attack on Panjdeh—Preparations in England for war—Mr. Gladstone's speech and the Czar's declaration—Zulfikar—Concessions—Lord Salisbury's declaration—The new Delimitation Commission—The Khoja Sale difficulty—Protocol of July 22, 1887.

AT the close of the previous year (1884) the position of the opposing forces on the Afghan frontier was as follows: The Russian troops in the Trans-Caspian district were chiefly concentrated at Merv and Askabad, with advanced detachments at Old Sarakhs and Yulatan, while in front of these last named localities outposts had been pushed forward to Pul-i-khatun and Sanduk Kuchan. On the Afghan side a considerable force was concentrated at Herat, with outposts at Kusan, Zulfikar, and Gulran; Panjdeh was also held by a force of 800 infantry, 300 horsemen, and two guns, supported by the Afghan garrisons at Maruchak, Bala Murghab, and Maimana; and to the north of Panjdeh a small Afghan picquet occupied Sari

Yazi, about ten miles to the south of Sanduk Kuchan, where the Russian outpost was established.

Early in February 1885 a party of Cossacks, 100 strong, threatened to attack the Afghan picquet at Sari-Yazi, and then pushed past it and occupied Aimak Jar, which is some three miles farther to the south. By this sudden movement the Russians deliberately crossed the line which Alikhanoff himself had acknowledged to be the true boundary between the Panjdeh and Yulatan districts; and as the Afghan picquet was thus placed in a dangerously isolated position, the Amir's representative—Kazi-Saad-ud-din Khan—asked Sir Peter Lumsden's advice as to whether the Russians should be driven back by force. The British Commissioner, however, was most anxious to prevent any collision, and he therefore told the Afghans to withdraw their troops from Sari-Yazi to some point to the south of Aimak Jar, but advised them to inform the Russians that any further movement towards Panjdeh would be resisted by force. He at the same time wrote to Alikhanoff, pointing out the necessity of both sides avoiding friction, and proposing that as the Afghans would limit their patrolling to the country to the south of Orush Dushan, he should in like manner abstain from advancing beyond Sari-Yazi.

But Lumsden's pacific overtures were of no avail, and the Russians no longer attempted to conceal their intention to seize all the most important points on the principal avenues leading to

Herat. Cossack detachments were pushed forward to Zulfikar and Ak-Robat; the Afghans were forced to fall back from Orush Dushan (on the Murghab), and a Russian post was established at Kizil Tepé;¹ Alikhanoff began to write letters to the Sariks of Panjdeh, instigating them to rise against the Afghans, and threatening them with the confiscation of their flocks of sheep in the event of non-compliance; and on March 16 a party of Russians even tried to push past the Afghan intrenchments at Ak-Tepé.

As soon as it became known that the Russians had commenced a fresh movement toward Herat the British Foreign Office made a strong representation to the Russian Government, pointing out the disastrous consequences which would inevitably result from such continued advances, urging that orders might be issued for the withdrawal of the advanced detachments at Zulfikar and on the Murghab, and engaging that the Afghans on their side would not advance from their position before Panjdeh. This communication was met by a distinct refusal on the part of the Russian Government to evacuate the points which had been seized by their troops; but they at the same time declared that the Russian troops would advance no farther,

¹ Kizil Tepé is a mound on the left bank of the Kushk river, one mile to the north of Pul-i-khisti, and about the same distance from the confluence of the Kushk and Murghab streams.

Pul-i-khisti, or the 'Brick Bridge,' is a bridge of nine arches spanning the river Kushk at a distance of about three-quarters of a mile to the south-west of Ak-Tepé. It is also called Dash-Kepri, and is thus referred to in the Russian reports.

and that the most stringent orders had been issued to the commandants of Russian posts to abstain by all means from anything which could cause a conflict with the Afghan troops.

On the strength of this assurance Mr. Gladstone, on March 13, made a statement in the House of Commons to the effect that it had been agreed between England and Russia that no farther advance should be made by the Russian or Afghan forces respectively to points within the debated or debatable ground. In order, however, that there might be no mistake regarding this matter, the British Ambassador at St. Petersburg was instructed to inquire of M. de Giers whether he agreed that the assurances which had been given might correctly be held to constitute an agreement to the effect stated by the Prime Minister; and a few days later the answer was received that 'the Russian forces would not advance from the positions they now occupy provided that the Afghans should not advance nor attack them, or unless some extraordinary circumstances should happen, such as a disturbance in Panjdeh.' This fresh promise was given by M. de Giers to Sir E. Thornton on March 16, 1885, and two days later the Russian Foreign Minister again informed the British Ambassador that Mr. Gladstone's statement in the House of Commons was a faithful representation of the declarations given by the Russian Government, and that the agreement thus entered into had received the approval of his Majesty the Czar.

Unfortunately, the promise so given was of no

greater value than the many similar pledges which had been given on previous occasions, only to be broken one after the other; and it will soon be shown how the Russian troops not only did advance beyond the positions which they occupied on March 16, but actually made a deliberate and unprovoked attack against the Afghan position before Pandjeh.

While the St. Petersburg authorities were protesting that they had no intention of making any further advances, reinforcements were being rapidly pushed forward up the Murghab, and on March 25 General Komaroff arrived at Kizil Tepé with a force of some 1,500 men, with the avowed intention of driving the Afghans out of their intrenched position at Ak Tepé and Pul-i-khisti. This advance of the main body of Russian troops, although undoubtedly a hostile demonstration, was not contrary to the agreement of March 16, for the Russians were in possession of Kizil Tepé at the time when that agreement was made; but, as the subsequent movements of the Russians were directly opposed to the terms of the agreement, it is necessary to mention that when M. de Giers promised that the Russian troops would not advance beyond the positions they then occupied, Kizil Tepé was their most advanced post in the Murghab Valley, and the Afghan position at that time extended from the right bank of the Murghab river to a point some distance to the west of the Pul-i-khisti bridge. If Komaroff, therefore, had remained at Kizil Tepé, and had taken care to prevent his troops from

advancing any closer to the Afghan position, the subsequent conflict would not have occurred, and Russia would not have laid herself open to the charge of having violated the promise which she had given that her troops would make no farther advance. He, however, having massed his force almost within range of the Afghan position, determined to push matters to extremities, and made daily attempts to provoke the Afghans, and thus to induce them to commence the conflict. For this purpose a party of about 100 horsemen advanced in a threatening manner from Kizil Tepé towards Pul-i-khisti on March 26; and again on the following day two bodies of Russian troops simultaneously advanced, pushed past the Afghan picquets, and tried to turn both flanks of the Afghan position.¹

In spite of these hostile demonstrations the Afghans displayed remarkable forbearance and control, and would not permit themselves to be drawn into a conflict; and when Komaroff found that he could not provoke them to fire the first shot, he—on March 29—sent an ultimatum to the

¹ On this occasion Alikhanoff, with 300 horsemen, pushed through the Afghan picquets before Pul-i-khisti, and attempted to reach Panjdeh round the left flank of the Afghan position, but was forced to return by a superior Afghan force which was sent in pursuit; while at the same time 250 Russian infantry crossed the Murghab and moved round the right flank of the position, but they also fell back when the Afghans barred their way by an equal force, and warned the Russian officer that if he advanced farther he would be fired upon. It speaks highly for the forbearance of the Afghans that they on these occasions did not fire on the Russians, who openly displayed their hostile intentions by forcing the picquets and by advancing beyond the flanks of the Afghan position.

Afghan commander, requiring that every single Afghan soldier should be withdrawn from the left bank of the Kushk by that evening, and that the Afghan posts on the right bank of the Murghab should not advance beyond the confluence of the Kushk and Murghab. As soon as this letter was received Captain Yate—who was in Panjdeh, watching events—obtained an interview with Colonel Zakr-chevski, Komaroff's chief of the staff, and, after explaining that the Afghans' position was the same as they had occupied on March 16, he earnestly asked that the ultimatum might be reconsidered. Ghaus-ud-din Khan also sent a letter to Komaroff stating that he was prepared to meet the Russian commander's wishes as far as possible by altering the position of picquets and vedettes in front of his position, although he was in other respects bound to loyally obey the orders which he had received from his master, the Amir.

But Komaroff was not to be turned from his purpose. He would accept nothing less than the entire evacuation of the Afghan intrenchments on the left bank of the Kushk and the withdrawal of their posts on the right bank of the Murghab, knowing full well that if his terms were complied with Ak-Tepé would have been no longer tenable, and the Afghans would have been obliged to abandon the whole of their position and fall back to the south of Panjdeh. Compliance with such an extravagant demand was, however, quite impossible. Ghaus-ud-din had received distinct orders to defend the Panjdeh district ; he had been

told by Sir Peter Lumsden that any farther Russian advance should be resisted; and as this communication from the British Commissioner was made in accordance with instructions received from the British Government,¹ he without doubt acted rightly in refusing to agree to terms which would have necessitated the abandonment of his position.

What followed is almost too well known to need relating. On the following day the Russians attacked the Afghan intrenchments, and, although the defenders offered a stubborn resistance and suffered a loss of 900 men, they had no chance against their better armed opponents, and were soon driven in confusion towards Herat.² After the battle a temporary administration, under Russian control, was formed in the Panjdeh district, and the Russian forces were then withdrawn to the left bank of the Kushk. The British Commissioner, with his staff and escort, at once fell back from Gulran, and after an arduous march over the Paropamisus range reached Tirpul, near Kusan, with a loss of three Afghan troopers and eight followers.

When the news of this fight reached England on April 7 all hopes of a peaceful settlement of

¹ On March 3 Lord Granville wrote to Sir Peter Lumsden as follows: 'Her Majesty's Government cannot advise the Afghans to attack the Russian troops in order to dislodge them from the positions they now occupy, *but Her Majesty's Government consider that the further advance of the Russians should, subject to military considerations, be resisted by the Afghans.*'

² In this affair the Russians are said to have lost one officer (Turkoman) and ten men killed, and three officers and twenty-nine men wounded.

the frontier difficulties were rudely dispelled, and a conviction prevailed throughout the country that war was inevitable. It was evident that the question had entered upon a dangerous phase; and as it did not appear likely that Russia would withdraw her troops or disavow the actions of her agents, no one was surprised to see that the Ministry was being borne along, in spite of the well-known sympathies of its leader, on a road which could have no other issue than the battlefield. In India also, where the situation was better understood, the effect of this intelligence was even greater; and it was generally believed that the time had at last arrived when Russia's advances would have to be checked by force of arms, and that the great struggle for mastery in Asia was about to commence.

Preparations for war were rapidly pushed forward in both countries: fast cruisers, selected from amongst the finest ships of the mercantile marine, were chartered by Government for the purpose of protecting British commerce, and to harass the enemy's trade; the troops which had been sent to Egypt for further operations in the Soudan were stopped at Souakim and other points on the main road to India; orders were issued for the rapid supply of arms and ammunition, and for the preparation of a great naval squadron for operations in Russian waters; and on April 27, Mr. Gladstone asked the House of Commons for a vote of credit of 11,000,000*l*.¹

¹ Of this sum 4,500,000*l*. was asked for to cover the cost of the

On this occasion, in the course of a brilliant and successful speech, the Prime Minister declared that he and his colleagues had laboured, and would continue to labour, for an honourable settlement by pacific means; then, after sketching the outline of the facts of the case, he alluded to the agreement of March 16, and expressed the opinions of the Government in the following weighty words :

‘ Sir, it was a very solemn covenant, involving great issues. There were thousands of men—on the one side standing for their country, and on the other side for what they thought their patriotic duty—placed in a position of dangerous contiguity and in danger of bloody collision. This engagement came between the danger and the people exposed to it; and we believed that it would be recognised as one of the most sacred covenants ever made between two great nations, and that there would be rivalry between the two Powers to sift the incidents that followed to the end, and how it came about, and who and where were the persons upon whom the responsibility rested. All this, sir, remains in suspense.

‘ What happened? The bloody engagement of March 30 followed the covenant. I shall overstate nothing. I shall not purposely overstate anything. All I say is this—that that woeful engagement of March 30 distinctly showed that

operations in the Soudan, while the remaining 6,500,000*l.* was for special preparations in connection with the Afghan difficulty, viz. four millions for the army, and two and a half millions for the navy.

one party or both had, either through ill-will or through unfortunate mishap, failed to fulfil the conditions of the engagement.

‘We considered it, and we consider it still, to be the duty of both countries—and, above all, I will say for the honour of both countries—to examine how and by whose fault this calamity came about. I will have no foregone conclusion. I will not anticipate that we are in the right; and although I have perfect confidence in the honour and intelligence of our officers, I will not now assume that they may not have been misled. I will prepare myself for the issue, and I will abide by it as far as I can in a spirit of impartiality. What I say is that those who have caused such an engagement to fail ought to become known to their own Government and to every contracting party. I will not say that we are even now in possession of all the facts of the case, but we are in possession of facts which create in our minds impressions unfavourable to the conduct of some of those who form the other party to these negotiations. But I will not deviate from the strictest principle of justice in anticipating anything of the ultimate issue of that fair inquiry which we desire to prosecute, and are endeavouring to prosecute. The cause of that deplorable collision may be uncertain.

‘Whose was the provocation is a matter of the utmost consequence. We know that the attack was a Russian attack; we know that the Afghans suffered in life, in spirit, and in repute;

we know that a blow was struck at the credit and authority of a sovereign—our protected ally—who had committed no offence. All I say, sir, is that we cannot in that state of things close this book and say, “We will look into it no more.” We must do our best to have right done in this matter.’

Such were the words in which Mr. Gladstone explained the situation and expressed the views of his Cabinet. It was no longer a question of debatable frontiers, but one of national honour. The agreement of March 16 had failed to avert a collision between the Russian and Afghan troops, and the British Government considered it to be the duty, and for the honour of both countries, to examine how, and by whose fault, the conflict had arisen. It was a clear issue; and as there was but little hope that Russia would consent to such an inquiry, it was no longer believed that hostilities could be averted, and the actual declaration of war was daily expected.

But after a week had passed in anxious suspense the crisis came to an end in an unexpected manner. The Czar declared that he was the sole judge as to whether his officers had acted in conformity with his orders, and he refused to permit any inquiry into the acts of General Komaroff; but, while he insisted that all further discussion of the military question should be dropped, he consented to refer to the judgment of a friendly sovereign any differences or misunderstandings which might be found to exist in regard to the

interpretation of the agreement of March 16. This offer was made on May 1, and three days later Mr. Gladstone announced that it had been accepted by the British Government as a settlement of the difficulty consistent with the honour of both States, and that negotiations regarding the delimitation of the frontier would at once be resumed in London.

It is not the intention here to inquire whether this solution of the question was a satisfactory one, or to what extent it was in accordance with the intentions of the Ministry as expressed by Mr. Gladstone in his speech of April 27. It has been variously described as a piece of consummate statecraft, lamentable vacillation, or abject surrender; but, while leaving the reader to form his own opinion on the matter, it will be sufficient to state that it was eventually arranged that Panjdeh should be exchanged for Zulfikar, and that in other respects the frontier line should be practically the same as that proposed in the Russian memorandum of January 28, 1885, and rejected by the British Foreign Office on March 13.¹

¹ It must, however, be mentioned that when the British Government refused to accept this line they believed that the Amir would insist on the retention of Panjdeh and Pul-i-khatun, as the former was known to have long formed a portion of Afghanistan, and was then held by an Afghan garrison, while the Amir in one of his letters to Sir Peter Lumsden strongly protested against the Russian occupation of Pul-i-khatun. Such being the case, they were bound under the engagements of 1880 to support what they believed to be the just claims of the Amir, and, under the circumstances, they rightly considered that they could not accept the line in question.

On April 4, 1885, however, the Amir, who was then at Rawul

But although the Russian Government agreed to hand over Zulfikar to the Afghans in exchange for the Pandjeh district, the negotiations soon came to a standstill owing to a difference of opinion as to the meaning of the word 'Zulfikar.' The British Ministry, who only agreed to this exchange because the Amir had insisted on the extreme importance of retaining command of the Zulfikar Pass, intended that the line should be drawn some distance to the north of the pass, so as to leave it and the adjacent heights entirely in the hands of the Afghans. But the Russians objected to this, and contended that only the old ruined watch-tower of Zulfikar on the banks of the Heri-Rud should be left to the Amir, while the pass and the surrounding heights to the north and east were to be entirely excluded from Afghan control; and they wound up by saying that if the British Government did not consent to this arrangement, Maruchak would have to be ceded to Russia in exchange for the hills which overlook the pass.

It was a preposterous demand, but one which was quite in keeping with the attitude which the

Pindi, informed Lord Dufferin that he did not set much store on Panjdeh, as he could not count on the loyalty of the Sariks; but he said that he attached vital importance to the retention of Maruchak, Gulran, and the Pass of Zulfikar. This declaration, of course, placed the matter in a very different light; but it unfortunately came too late to prevent the fight at Panjdeh and the complications which followed.

It is satisfactory to know that when the Amir was informed of the settlement which had been arrived at he sent a most friendly reply to the Viceroy of India, and said that he willingly accepted the line agreed upon.

Czar's Government maintained throughout the whole of these wretched negotiations ; for no sooner did the Gladstonian Cabinet make any concession than fresh demands were put forward : and so the game continued, England giving way time after time at all points along the line, while the Russian outposts were gradually pushed closer and closer to the 'Key of India.'

But the time had at last arrived when a stand was to be made against any further concession. The Gladstonian Ministry was defeated on the Budget, and as soon as Lord Salisbury came into power he informed the Russian Ambassador that Her Majesty's Government found it impossible to depart from the position they had taken up. The Russian Government, he said, had agreed in the previous April that 'the frontier would start from a point on the Heri-Rud a little to the north of Zulfikar,' and no reservation was made as to a portion of the pass being retained by Russia. Confiding in this engagement, the Amir had been informed that the Zulfikar Pass would be included in his dominions ; and such being the case, Her Majesty's Government considered that they were bound by the declarations thus made, and could not assign to the Russian promise any value which would detract in any degree from the right of the Afghans to the full possession of the pass which had been guaranteed to them.

This was all that was required. Russia had been playing 'a game of brag,' and had traded on the notoriously pacific character of the previous

Ministry in order to get as close as possible to the fair valley of Herat. But as soon as the British Government took up a strong position, and plainly intimated that the limit had been reached beyond which Russia could not be permitted to pass, Muscovite diplomacy was checkmated, and the extravagant demands of Russia were modified in favour of the Afghans. On September 10 the general line which the frontier was to take was recorded in a protocol, and it was agreed that the details should be fixed on the spot as expeditiously as possible by joint Commissioners appointed by the two Powers. The delimitation of the boundary was to be commenced at Zulfikar ; and it was also agreed that the escorts of the Commissioners should be limited to one hundred men on each side.

In accordance with the arrangement thus made, Colonel Ridgeway was appointed British Commissioner, with Major E. L. Durand as his assistant ; and on the Russian side Colonel Kuhlberg was appointed Commissioner, with Major Guedeonoff and M. Lessar as Assistant Commissioners. These representatives of the two Governments met at Zulfikar on November 10, the date fixed in the protocol, and two days later the first pillar of the Russo-Afghan boundary was erected in their presence and with the concurrence of the Amir's agent. For the next seven weeks the demarcation of the frontier progressed rapidly, and by December 26, 1885, the line was definitely laid down as far as the Murghab river in the vicinity of the fortress of Maruchak. By this time, however, the

winter had set in; and as further demarcation work was for the time impossible, the British Commission went into winter quarters at Charshamba, and the Russian party retired to Panjdeh.

One of the most important and difficult problems which the Commissioners had to settle during the delimitation of this portion of the boundary between the Heri-Rud and Murghab rivers was the question of irrigation. The lands cultivated by the Sariks of Panjdeh were entirely dependent for their water-supply on the streams which take their rise in the Paropamisus range, and it was therefore evident that unless some satisfactory settlement could be made there would be constant disputes between the Afghan and Russian settlers on the two sides of the frontier. Colonel Sir West Ridgeway, however, appreciated the consequences of such a state of things at their proper value, and attached the greatest importance to an equitable partition of the water in order that subsequent complications might not arise; and he accordingly agreed to the maintenance, so far as irrigation is concerned, of the *status quo* in the valley of the Kushk between Chihil Dukhtar and Kara Tappa Khurd (i.e. for a distance down the stream of about eight miles), and in the Kashan Valley between Torshekh and the dam above Robat-i-Kashan (i.e. for about fifteen miles). It was then definitely agreed that in the two above-mentioned sections the Afghans should not have the right to increase the number or extent of the canals in actual use, but that, provided this condition was observed,

they should retain the use and absolute control of all existing canals without interference; and it was further decided that if there should at any time be any deficiency of water in the canals which flow from Afghan into Russian territory, Russia would not be justified in making any claims, no matter from what cause such deficiency might arise.¹ The Russians also stipulated that they should be permitted to construct a new dam across the Murghab in the vicinity of Maruchak,² in order that they might obtain a greater supply of water for the Panjdeh district; and this point was also conceded, on the understanding that the dam should not be used as a passage, that no military post should be constructed on it, and that the Russians should have nothing whatever to do with the lands on the Afghan bank of the stream, excepting the actual head of the dam.

As soon as the winter was over the Commissioners once again resumed their labours, and the middle of March found them hard at work in fixing the frontier-line between the Murghab and the Oxus. Several slight differences of opinion naturally arose, but these were all amicably settled, and by May 26, 1886, the boundary to the north of Maimana and Daulatabad had been marked out by pillars as far eastwards as the Wells of Imam

¹ This settlement regarding the irrigation of lands between the Kushk and Murghab had subsequently to be slightly modified when the boundary itself was altered in July 1887.

² The frontier line follows the course of the Murghab (in mid-stream) for some distance to a point at the north end of the Maruchak Valley.

Nazar, some miles to the north of Andkhui. There, however, the work came to a standstill once more, on account of a serious difficulty which arose regarding the precise point at which the frontier-line should meet the left bank of the River Oxus.

In the Agreement of 1873 it was stated that the northern frontier of Afghan Turkestan was 'the line of the Oxus from the mouth of the Kokcha river to the post of Khoja Sale inclusive, on the high road from Bokhara to Balkh; nothing to be claimed by the Afghan Amir on the left bank of the Oxus below Khoja Sale;' and from thence the line was to be so drawn as to leave to Afghanistan the internal districts of Akcha, Siripul, etc. But when the Commissioners reached the Oxus, they found that, properly speaking, no post of Khoja Sale existed on the left bank of the river, although they found an old tomb of a Mahomedan saint bearing the name of Ziaret Khoja Sale, while on a neighbouring hill there was also a heap of ruins which some of the inhabitants knew by the designation of Serai Khoja Sale; and the matter was still further complicated by the discovery that there was no existing ferry across the Oxus bearing the name of Khoja Sale, although at the time of the Agreement of 1873 it was understood that such a ferry was actually in use.

Several important facts, however, were clearly established, the most important being—(1) that Khoja Sale was the name applied to a district on the left bank of the Oxus, which was divided into four sub-divisions called Khamiab, Dali (including

Islam), Karkin (commonly called Khoja Sale), and Akjui (including Dogharasi);¹ (2) that this district of Khoja Sale had always formed a portion of the province of Akcha, and since the time when Akcha was conquered by Dost Mahommed in 1850-51 the district of Khoja Sale had always remained in Afghan possession; (3) that a ferry had formerly existed at Islam in the Dali sub-division of the district for the benefit of traffic between Bokhara and Maimana, but that it had gradually been superseded by the Kilif ferry—further to the east—until, in 1872, it practically ceased to exist; and that this passage at Islam, while in existence, was known as the ferry of Khoja Sale, taking its name from the district to which it belonged; (4) that the Afghans and Bokharans, on being informed of the Agreement of 1873, had conjointly demarcated the frontier in accordance with their interpretation of the Agreement, and had fixed the boundary on the western limits of Khamiab, which was the extreme western sub-division of the Khoja Sale district, thus clearly showing that they recognised Afghan rights over the whole of the district of Khoja Sale.

Taking his stand, therefore, on these well authenticated facts, Colonel Sir West Ridgeway claimed that the frontier should follow the line which had been laid down by the Bokharan and Afghan officials, so that the whole district of Khoja Sale should continue under Afghan control, as it had been for the previous thirty-six years. He wished merely to preserve the *status quo*, and as

¹ These sub-divisions are named consecutively from west to east.

no place could be found which corresponded exactly with ‘the *post* of Khoja Sale upon the high road between Balkh and Bokhara,’ he proposed that recourse should be had to the spirit and intention of the Agreement of 1873, whereby it had been clearly intended by the two governments that both Bokhara and Afghanistan should retain possession of all the territories and lands they then held, and by which it had been agreed that Akcha (and therefore all its sub-districts also) should remain under the rule of the Amir of Kabul.

The Russian Commissioner, however, insisted on the question being settled in accordance with the strict wording of the Agreement, without any regard to other considerations. He therefore endeavoured to prove that the official residence of the governor of the district was ‘the *post* of Khoja Sale’ referred to in the Agreement; and although it was conclusively proved by the evidence of the inhabitants of the locality that the house in question was not built till long after the Agreement had been concluded, he still refused to give way an inch, and rejected all attempts which the British Commissioner made to arrive at a compromise. Thus, matters once more came to a standstill, and when it at last became evident that no satisfactory settlement could be arrived at on the spot, it was agreed between the two governments that the Commission should at once be withdrawn, and that the boundary from the Imam Nazar well to the Oxus should be settled by direct negotiation between the two governments either at London

or St. Petersburg, on the understanding that no alteration was to be made, except by mutual consent, in the portion of the frontier which had been already demarcated, and that everything should remain *in statu quo* in the undefined gap.

In accordance with this agreement, the British Commissioner left Khamiab with his staff and personal escort on September 15, 1886, and commenced his march to India through Kabul and Jalalabad. Eleven days later, on reaching Heibak, he joined hands with the main body of the mission and escort, which had passed the summer in the mountains near Mazar-i-Sherif, and from thence the party moved in three detachments across the Hindu Kush by way of the Chahardar Pass, while several smaller detached groups under the Survey and Intelligence officers were sent to the right and left to explore the other passes which lead across the great mountain barrier. The passage was effected just in time, for a heavy snow-storm was encountered before the last range was crossed; but Charikar was reached on October 12 with the trifling loss of two men, and there it was learnt that the Amir was encamped a few miles distant with a considerable force for the purpose of protecting the Commission from possible attacks of the Kohistanis, who had been the bitterest foes of the English during the last Afghan war.

During the progress of the Mission from Charikar to Kabul, Abdur Rahman, with his army, marched backwards and forwards on its flank to prevent disturbances and any possible outbreak of

fanaticism on the part of the people; and from the date of Sir West Ridgeway's entry into the Afghan capital (on October 15) until he left for India (on the 24th) the utmost consideration was shown to every member of the party, and all were treated with the most princely hospitality. At the Amir's special request the stay of the Mission was prolonged beyond the date which had been originally fixed for its departure; an address of welcome and friendship was presented by his military officers, who expressed the hope that all former hostilities would be forgotten, and that the two nations would always be allies in future; decorations were conferred by him on all the British officers; the members of the Mission—including the Sepoys and followers—were allowed to freely visit the city and its environs; and from first to last they were treated with an amount of kindness and respect which emphasised the satisfaction felt by all classes of the people at the success which had attended the labours of the Commission on behalf of Afghanistan.

As soon as Sir West Ridgeway arrived in England, the Russian Government were asked if they were prepared to enter upon the discussion of the Khoja Sale difficulty. The British Foreign Office in re-opening the question suggested that the negotiations should be resumed in London by the same persons who conducted the preliminary negotiations terminating in the Protocol of September 1885; but as M. Lessar had become seriously ill from the effects of exposure on the

Afghan frontier, it was eventually agreed that the negotiations should be conducted in St. Petersburg, and Sir West Ridgeway was instructed to proceed to the Russian capital so as to be there by April 13, 1887, the date fixed for the first meeting of the delegates.

It should here be mentioned that, before the Commissioners separated in the previous September, Colonel Kuhlberg informed Sir West Ridgeway that the boundary in the neighbourhood of Andkhui had been irregularly drawn, and he put forward a claim to certain wells which had been allotted to Afghanistan. This contention, however, was resisted by Colonel Ridgeway, who pointed out that the line had been demarcated by the Chief Commissioners after an exhaustive inquiry, and as the settlement had been confirmed by the two governments, and the frontier pillars had been actually erected, he very naturally refused to reopen the question which had been definitely settled some weeks before. Colonel Kuhlberg, however, refused, as usual, to give way, and as he declined to sign the map of the frontier which had been fixed as far as the Imam Nazar well, the settlement of this dispute was one of the tasks which was laid before the delegates in St. Petersburg; and thus, when the negotiations were resumed in the Russian capital in April 1887, there were two distinct points of issue between the British and Russian Governments:—

(1) Regarding a distance of some thirty miles of *demarcated* frontier to the west of Imam Nazar.

(2) Regarding the undefined gap of thirty-four miles between Imam Nazar and the banks of the Oxus.

The negotiations, however, were speedily brought to a satisfactory conclusion, and on July 22, 1887, a final Protocol was signed, whereby it was agreed that the Amir of Afghanistan should retain possession of the whole of the Khoja Sale *district* (including Khamiab), and that the frontier between the Kushk and Murghab Rivers should be slightly modified, in order that the Sariks of Panjdeh might regain possession of certain cultivated lands which they had been deprived of by the demarcation which had been previously carried out.¹

By the signature and confirmation of this Protocol the delimitation of the north-western frontier was at last completed; and as many imagine that the settlement thus arrived at was unfavourable to the Amir, it will be well to quote two opinions on the matter.

The first is that of Sir West Ridgeway, who said:—‘I do not think the Amir has any reason to be dissatisfied with the result of the demarcation. He himself pressed for the delimitation of the frontier, and he himself decided that Panjdeh

¹ When the Protocol of September 1885 was concluded, it was not known that the Sariks of Panjdeh had extended their cultivation into the side valleys of the Kushk and Kashan, where they had opened canals and reclaimed land, although they still continued to reside in the Panjdeh Valley. They were thus deprived of their lands in the Kushk, Kashan, and Murghab valleys, with the exception of certain plots and canals which Sir West Ridgeway agreed to their retaining in return for concessions elsewhere.

was not worth fighting for. It seems to be supposed that we forced the Amir to acquiesce in the Russian annexation of Panjdeh, but at the interview between Lord Dufferin and the Amir at Rawul Pindi, the Amir—without any pressure by the Viceroy—decided to give up the valley. His Highness then mentioned those places which he considered essential for Afghanistan, viz.—Zulfi-kar, Gulran, and Maruchak. Accordingly, if the frontier had been demarcated just north of those three places, the Amir would have had no cause of complaint. But much more has been done for the Amir, and he has gained land which was never before in his possession. Indeed, I calculate that, after allowing for the loss of Panjdeh and the lands now given up in the valleys of the Kushk, Kashan, and Murghab, the territories of the Amir are increased by 400 square miles. Panjdeh was lost to the Amir before the demarcation began, but through the demarcation of the frontier he has not lost a penny of revenue, a single subject, or an acre of land which was occupied or cultivated by any Afghan subject.’

The second opinion which it is proposed to quote is that of the Amir Abdur Rahman Khan himself, who expressed his approval of the final settlement in the following words: ¹—

‘In the first place I feel much obliged, and am

¹ See letter from the Amir to the Viceroy of India dated August 16, 1886, and written in reply to a communication from Lord Dufferin in which His Highness was informed of the final settlement of the north-western boundary of Afghanistan.

inspired with hope on account of the great attention and far-seeing and royal consideration of Her Imperial and Dignified Majesty, the great Queen of England and Empress of India. Secondly, the good and the state-adorning opinion of the representatives of the illustrious government is worthy of praise and the cause of happiness and thanks, for the knots in the thread of discussion with the Russian Government, which were tied with regard to the Afghan frontiers, have been untied and opened with the tips of the fingers of excellent measures. They (the Queen and the representatives) adopted the right policy, which is better than the first one. I know for certain that the representatives of the illustrious British Government have, from the first stage of the demarcation (settlement of the boundary) of Afghanistan with the Russian Government until the conclusion of the question, viz. : the decision and settlement of the claim of that (Russian) Government to the Khamiab district, reached their destination after having traversed many hard and difficult stages of discussion on the noble steed of minute thoughts. It is one of the results and consequences of the sincere friendship of the two parties that the Russian Government, notwithstanding its large number of troops, its power, and its natural noise and despotism, has entered the door of refraining and abstaining from conquest and war with these two auspicious governments, as it knew that the war would have an unhappy result and would entail a heavy loss on itself. Had it not seen the

foundation of the friendship of these two united kingdoms strong and firm, and the basis of the affection and sympathy of the two governments solid and stable, it would hardly have come down from the palace of its desires and the mansion of its wish to subjugate Afghanistan and occupy India. I look upon the kind friendship of the illustrious British Government as the cause of the flourish of the tree of the Afghan Government, and it is undoubtedly so. It is also plain and clear in the gracious sight of Her Sublime Majesty, the great Queen, and in that of the representatives of the illustrious government, that my person, which exhibits sincerity, shuns and keeps away from the course and system of the former Amirs of Afghanistan; and it will, please God, remain so firm and constant in the engagements of perpetual friendship with the said Government, that among all the powers it will be famous and distinguished in consequence of this exalted name and exalted character. I agree to, and approve of, the settlement and decision of the question of Khamiab with the Russian Government, viz. :—that the representatives of the illustrious British Government have considered it advisable and good for the time being to exchange the piece of land in which the Sarik flocks are now grazing, with my permission. In accordance with what your Excellency wrote, I have issued explicit orders to the officials of Herat, enjoining them to make over to the Sariks that piece of land.'

CHAPTER XX

1887—1893

RUSSIAN MOVEMENTS IN THE PAMIRS

Revolt in Afghan-Turkestan—Persian concessions to England, and Russian jealousy—Secret convention between Russia and Persia—Outrage on Younghusband and Davison—Russian activity in the Pamirs—Afghans and Chinese boundary—Affair at Soma Tash—Riots at Tashkent—Latest Russian assurances—Fort on the Murghab—Chitral and Kanjut—Rumours and dangers.

FOR two or three years after the conclusion of the negotiations between England and Russia regarding the north-western boundary of Afghanistan, the chief interest of Central Asian concerns was centred in the serious rebellions which broke out in Afghanistan, and which threatened the very stability of Abdur Rahman's rule. The first signs of disaffection appeared among the Ghilzais, who in 1887 broke out into open rebellion. They, however, were reduced to order after a protracted campaign, and the Amir then had leisure to turn his attention to the subjugation of some of the independent or semi-independent tribes which inhabit the country to the north of the Khyber Pass. But before this second campaign was concluded, the Amir, who had established his headquarters at Jalalabad, was recalled to Kabul by

news of a serious revolt which had occurred in Afghan-Turkestan.

During the Amir's exile in Turkestan, one of his companions in misfortune was his cousin Ishak Khan; and when Abdur Rahman was proclaimed Amir of Kabul, this chief had cordially assisted him in his efforts to consolidate his kingdom, and as a reward for his services was made Governor of Afghan-Turkestan. There for several years Ishak had loyally carried out his duties, but in 1887 the Amir began to have grave reasons to suspect his fidelity, and therefore summoned him and other suspected chiefs to Kabul. This order brought matters to a crisis, for Ishak Khan not only declined to obey, but induced the Mir of Maimana to join him in his defiance of the central authority. It was an inopportune moment, for the Ghilzais had been suppressed, Ayub Khan was a prisoner in the hands of the English, and Abdur Rahman was therefore able to devote the whole of his attention to the suppression of this new revolt. Ishak, however, determined to make a bold bid for the throne of Kabul itself, and after proclaiming himself Amir he endeavoured to win over the garrison of Maimana to his cause. But the attempt failed. The troops which he sent for the purpose seized their leaders and handed them over to the Herat authorities; and Ishak, then at the head of a small army of some 7,000 men, made a bold advance southwards in order to gain possession of the pass at Bamian. But there he was once more foiled by Gholam Hyder, the Amir's Commander-in-Chief, who had already occupied

the Pass, and who then, pushing rapidly forward, stormed the Kamard Pass, and routed a body of rebel cavalry at Ghorī. Ishak Khan then fell back and concentrated his forces at Ghaznigak, near Khulm, where he was attacked on September 4, 1888. During the early portion of the day the battle was against the Amir, for the left wing of his army was defeated and driven from the field. But, thinking the victory assured, the rebels stopped to plunder the camp, and while they were so engaged, Gholam Hyder retrieved the fortune of the day by leading a vigorous charge with his right wing upon a division commanded by Ishak in person. This attack was completely successful, and the fire from the breech-loading rifles supplied by the Indian Government soon forced the insurgents to fall back with severe loss, when Ishak fled to Russian territory, and a few days later his beaten army surrendered at discretion.

After the suppression of this rebellion, the Amir went in person to Afghan-Turkestan to restore order in that portion of his dominions. His presence in the neighbourhood of Mazar-i-Sherif for six months in the spring and summer of 1889 was supposed by the Russians to be a menace to the peace of their frontier possessions, and they therefore strengthened their outposts on the border, and considerable reinforcements were sent to Turkestan by the new Central Asian Railway, which had been completed as far as Samarkand on the 27th of the previous May.¹ But matters gradually

¹ During the war scare which followed the Russian occupation

quieted down, and with the exception of an abortive attempt at rebellion in Badakshan, no further disquieting events occurred in the northern provinces of the Amir's dominions.

In the meanwhile the rivalry between England and Russia in Persia again became very keen. In the previous autumn (1888), the new British Minister at Teheran, Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, induced the Shah to open the Karun River to British merchant vessels, and to refuse permission for the establishment of a Russian Consul at Meshed. The Russians were furious at these concessions; they declared that Northern and Southern Persia had fallen completely under British influence, and the press even went so far as to allude to the episode as a national disaster comparable only to Lomakin's defeat at Denghil Tepé. The Russian Foreign Office, however, made vigorous representations on the subject, and as the Shah had long been taught that the security of his kingdom and dynasty was dependent in a great measure on the goodwill of Russia, he soon receded from the

of Merv, and while the Afghan boundary was still under dispute, the railway which had been constructed from Michaelovsk to Kizil Arvat during Skobeleff's campaign against the Tekkés was extended through Askabad, Dushak, Merv and Charjui to Samarkand. The bridges over the Tejend, Murghab, and Oxus Rivers are wooden structures, but steps are being taken to substitute iron girder bridges over the Tejend and Murghab, as has already been done at the Zarafshan crossing at Kara Kul. Curzon states that much trouble has recently been caused by the Oxus having shifted its channel more than half a mile to the eastwards, which has necessitated a corresponding extension of the Charjui Bridge. The western terminus of the line is at present at Uzun Ada, but the Ministry of War a short time ago authorised an extension from Mulla Kari to Krasnovodsk, which will be the future terminus on the Caspian.

position he had taken up, yielded on the question of the Russian Consulate at Meshed, and issued a decree before the close of the year (1888), by which the Karun River was open to the mercantile marine of the whole world, several vexatious conditions being at the same time imposed which detract greatly from the value of the concession.

But the Russians were not content with this partial success. They had too long been accustomed to have their own way in Persia, and they resented any increase of British influence over any portion of the Shah's dominions; and, thanks to the efforts of their envoy, Prince Dolgorouki, a secret convention was concluded in the spring of 1889, in which the following concessions are said to have been made:—

I. That all foreign contracts for the construction of railways in Persia should, for five years, be communicated to the Russian Government before their acceptance, and that Russian contractors should be given the first refusal for such work.

II. That Persia should permit Russian vessels to freely navigate the Murd-ab, or lagoon of Enzeli, and allow wharves and depôts to be constructed there.

III. That Persia should construct a high road from Pir-i-Bazaar to Teheran; and also complete without delay their portion of the road leading from Askabad to Kushan.¹

¹ This road was commenced by the Russians in 1882, in order that they might obtain a comparatively secure and short road leading from the headquarters of the Trans-Caspian province to Meshed

Prince Dolgorouki is said to have tried very hard to induce the Shah to give up Kelat-i-Nadri to Russia, but the 'king of kings' would not hear of such a thing, and the great natural fortress still remains in Persian hands, but is in such a neglected condition and is so inadequately garrisoned that it must fall to Russia as soon as she decides on making a fresh move in the direction of Meshed.

Having obtained a footing close to the Herat Valley, and secured very valuable concessions from Persia, the Russian Government then began to turn their attention towards the only portion of Central Asia where imperfectly defined frontiers would enable them to advance closer to the outposts of the Indian Empire. It has already been mentioned that, when the Agreement of 1873 was concluded, the north-eastern and north-western limits of the Amir's dominions had been defined with an amount of laxity which rendered future complications possible and even inevitable ; and it has been shown how Russia took advantage of this state of affairs to drive a wedge into Afghanistan in the neighbourhood of Herat. But after she had gained as much as she wanted in that direction for the time being, and as soon as the frontier from the Heri-Rud to the Oxus had been accurately

and Herat. They at this time induced the Persians to undertake the portion to the south of the frontier ; but although the work was commenced, it progressed so slowly that the Russians in 1888 thought it time to insist on its early completion. The Persians, on the conclusion of this secret convention, commenced work in real earnest, but from recent accounts the work appears to have been very badly done, and a very second-class road has resulted.

demarcated, she had to hold her hand so far as the north-western borders of Afghanistan were concerned, and she then commenced a similar movement farther towards the east, where the frontier had been defined with an even greater amount of ambiguity, owing to the unfortunate omission of a line in Lord Granville's despatch of October 17, 1872.

Ever since Skobeleff's Alai expedition in 1876, when the northern portion of the Pamir region was annexed to the Czar's dominions, Russian agents have been actively employed in exploring the country at the head waters of the Oxus. The task thus commenced has been carried out in the most thorough manner, for while every mountain pass and valley has been examined and surveyed with the greatest care, the scattered tribesmen of the country have been given glowing accounts of the benefits of Russian rule and of the power of the Great White Czar; and then, when the Pamir plateau itself had been completely explored, these Muscovite agents pushed farther afield, and a Cossack captain named Grombchevsky even marched across the Hindu Kush and began to intrigue with the petty chieftains on the northern borders of Kashmir. For four years this officer continued his so-called researches, during which he was hospitably entertained on several occasions by the chief of Hunza, who had completely espoused the Russian cause; but it was not until the autumn of 1891 that public attention was attracted to the movements of Russian detachments in this little-

known corner of the world by the receipt of news that British officers had been rudely warned off the Pamirs by a Russian colonel of Cossacks who had been sent there with a small expeditionary force.

Captain Younghusband, who was on special duty in the Intelligence Department of the Government of India, had for some time past been engaged in exploring the country to the north of the Himalayas, and had spent the previous winter in Kashgar. There he was joined by an adventurous young subaltern named Davison, and in July 1891 these two officers started to return to India by way of the Pamirs and Gilgit. They followed the most direct route via the Gez defile, and on reaching the Buluk-Kul Lake they parted company, Davison travelling towards the Alichur Pamir, while Younghusband continued his march southwards through Tash-Kurgan and the Taghdum-Bash Pamir to the deserted village of Bozai-Gumbaz in the Wakhan Valley, which he found occupied by a small party of Russian soldiers, who were joined a few days later by another detachment of twenty men under the command of Colonel Yanoff.

The first meeting between the two officers was of a friendly nature, and after the Russian colonel and his staff had had tea and wine in the British officer's tent, they returned the hospitality by inviting him to dinner. But these pleasant relations did not last long, and Younghusband was shortly afterwards informed that the Governor-General of

Turkestan had issued orders for him to be arrested and conducted to Margelan, unless he gave a written promise to quit the neighbourhood at once and not to travel in what the Russian officer styled 'newly acquired Russian territory.' Under the circumstances Captain Younghusband was compelled to yield to superior force, and he accordingly left Bozai-Gumbaz and returned to the Taghdum-bash Pamir, where he remained for six weeks and was able to learn that the Russians, after their arrival at Bozai-Gumbaz, had crossed the Hindu Kush by the Korabhut Pass, and after journeying for some distance through the Yakhun Valley district of the Chitral State, then recrossed the Hindu Kush by the Baroghil Pass and journeyed northwards through Afghan territory to the Alichur Pamir.

In the meanwhile Davison had met in the Alichur Pamir a Chinese general who was engaged in building a small fort for one of the Chinese detachments which had for many years been established in that part of the Pamir region; and while there the Russians arrived from their raid across the Hindu Kush. Colonel Yanoff thereupon claimed the district as Russian territory, compelled the Chinese to immediately withdraw, and placing Lieutenant Davison under arrest, conveyed him towards Margelan, but eventually set him free before reaching that place. The young Englishman then made his way towards Kashgaria and rejoined Younghusband on the Taghdum-bash Pamir on October 4, when the two outraged

officers made their way back to Gilgit, arriving there in safety eleven days later.

Now, although the north-eastern frontier of Afghanistan was defined in the Agreement of 1873 in a manner which permitted of considerable divergence of opinion as to the true meaning of the phraseology therein adopted, it is nevertheless perfectly clear that Russia cannot, by any possible interpretation of the clause in question, lay claim to any portion of the country which lies to the south of the branch of the Oxus which takes its rise in Lake Victoria (Sir-i-kul). The deserted village of Bozai-Gumbaz is many miles to the south of that branch of the Oxus, and the Russians therefore have no shadow of a claim to that portion of the Pamir region, and Colonel Yanoff's action was nothing more nor less than a piece of effrontery which surpassed any of the outrageous actions of Komaroff and Alikhanoff; for it must be remembered that he not only made a prisoner of one British officer and ordered another off ground which was unquestionably within the recognised limits of British influence, but he moreover marched across the Hindu Kush with a considerable detachment of Cossacks, and then promenaded through the valleys on the borders of the Kashmir State, passing the whole time through territory which was recognised as being far beyond Russia's sphere of action in Central Asia.

It thus became perfectly clear that although Russia had repeatedly agreed not to interfere in any way with the States to the south of the liminary

line laid down in 1873, no reliance could be placed on the promises so given; and the Indian Government was therefore compelled to take steps to put an end to any further tampering with the petty chieftains to the south of the Hindu Kush. A small force was accordingly sent against the contumacious chief of Hunza, who was not only notoriously friendly towards the Muscovites, but—in addition to his political misdeeds—gained a reputation for cold-blooded crime¹ and misgovernment which rendered his punishment and removal necessary for the peace of the border. After a brief but brilliant little campaign this undesirable neighbour was driven out of his country; and although further operations in these wild mountain regions were necessitated on account of serious troubles and complications in Chitral, the situation has been steadily improving, and now that a British resident has been appointed at Chitral it is to be hoped that not only has the door been slammed in the face of Russia,² but that it will be kept firmly closed for the future.

But while the Indian authorities were thus taking measures to guard the Hindu Kush passes and to prevent any further Russian interference

¹ Younghusband relates that this chief murdered his father, poisoned his mother, and threw his two brothers over precipices, and then announced his misdeeds to his suzerain, the Maharaja of Kashmir, in the following terms: 'By the grace of God and the decree of fate my father and I fell out. I took the initiative and settled the matter, and have placed myself on the throne of my ancestors.'

² The Russian Prince Galitzin, while travelling in India during the cold weather of 1891-92, remarked with reference to the recent expedition to Hunza-Nagar: 'Ils ont fermé la porte au nez.'

with the petty States to the south of that range, the Muscovites redoubled their efforts to gain possession of the whole of the Pamir plateau, and also took advantage of the disturbed state of Afghanistan to commence intrigues with the people of Afghan-Turkestan and with the rebellious Hazara subjects of the Amir. Russian emissaries were sent across the border to join and assist the Hazaras; followers of Ishak Khan were let loose for the purpose of fomenting trouble and disaffection among the border tribes; and a detachment of Cossacks under a Russian captain was even sent across the recently demarcated boundary and temporarily occupied an Afghan town.

It was in the Pamirs, however, that the Russians displayed the greatest signs of activity. They saw clearly that the time was approaching for settling the frontier question, which had for so many years been in dispute, and they evidently considered that the simplest manner of securing an advantageous settlement was by resorting to the same tactics which had been employed with such signal success on the Heri-Rud and Murghab in 1884 and 1885. The methods adopted were simple and efficacious, and were perfectly familiar to those who had studied the history of Russia's conquests in Central Asia. On June 14, 1892, Colonel Yanoff again set out from Margelan at the head of a force of some 3,000 men of all arms,¹ and accompanied by a

¹ The accounts in the St. Petersburg and Moscow journals fix the numbers at about double the number of troops here mentioned; and although the actual strength of the column cannot be accurately

number of volunteers, naturalists, geologists, and others who were intent on scientific research. The infantry formed the advance guard of the force, and the whole of the troops were excellently equipped, with the exception of the artillery, which is described as mediocre both in quantity and quality. During the march across the Alai and Trans-Alai ranges the expedition had to encounter some violent storms and heavy rain, which made the roads almost impassable and drenched the men through and through. In one of these storms numbers of telegraph posts, newly erected by the troops as they advanced, were blown down, and a shell is said to have been exploded by lightning in one of the camps. But although the members of the expedition had to put up with the greatest hardships, they reached the banks of the Murghab by the middle of July, and there Yanoff found that the political situation had greatly changed since his former visit.

The limits of the Afghan and Chinese possessions in the centre of the Pamir plateau, between the Murghab and Ab-i-Panjah, have never been defined, for the simple reason that neither the Afghans nor Chinese ever troubled themselves much about this region until they saw that the Russians intended to take advantage of their neglect by occupying the territory in the Czar's name. The country immediately to the north of the Victoria Lake (Sir-i-kul) has been a sort of debatable

ascertained, there is no doubt that at least 3,000 men took part in the expedition.

land between China and Afghanistan, although there appears to be little doubt that the true boundary between the two States is a line passing close to Lake Sasik Kul in the Alichur Pamir. A Chinese outpost had long been established at Burzila Jai, in the neighbourhood of that lake, and when Yanoff visited the Pamirs in 1891 he found the Chinese in occupation. But after Yanoff expelled the Chinese, the Afghans appear to have stepped in, and when the Russian officer in 1892 revisited the scene of his previous filibustering expedition, he found that the Afghans had established a post as far eastwards as Ak Tash, in the neighbourhood of the Neza Tash Pass, and had also placed a stray picquet at Soma Tash, a little to the west of what appears to be the true boundary between the Afghan and Chinese possessions. He accordingly at once made up his mind to expel the Afghans from the whole region between the Murghab and Ab-i-Panjah; and, starting off from his camp on the Murghab with a large force, he reached Soma Tash at daybreak on the morning of July 25.

It appears that the Afghans were, at the time, asleep in their camp, and before they had any idea of the near approach of a hostile force, the Afghan commandant's tent was surrounded by some eighty Cossacks, the remainder of the Russian detachment being concealed from view a short distance away. Shams-ud-Din Khan, the commander of the Afghan post, then advanced and inquired what the Russians were doing on Afghan soil; but after a short conversation he was informed that his men must lay

down their arms. This demand was haughtily rejected by the Afghan, who declared that he held the post for his master, the Amir, and would obey the orders of no one else. Yanoff then ordered him away and appears to have used violence towards him, whereupon he drew his pistol and fired, the ball piercing the Russian officer's belt and wounding a Cossack who was behind him. A scuffle ensued, in which Shams-ud-Din and six other Afghans were at once killed, while the remainder of the party fled behind their tents, and continued to fire on the Russians from behind the cover thus obtained. The fight, however, was soon over, and in the end nine more Afghans were killed, two wounded, and one drowned in the Alichur River, while six men were taken prisoners, and the messengers who had been despatched on horseback with a letter to the Governor of Badakshan were pursued and detained in the Russian camp for two or three days. In this affair the Russian losses were very trifling; only three men being wounded, one of whom was the Cossack who was struck by the first shot which was fired.

While Yanoff was thus disposing of the principal Afghan outpost at Soma Tash, another Russian detachment marched eastwards towards the Tagh-dum-Bash Pamir for the purpose of expelling the small Afghan detachment which had established itself at Ak-Tash, on the left bank on the upper waters of the Murghab stream—there called the Ak-Su. On arriving there, the Russian commander behaved in precisely the same way as

Yanoff had done at Soma Tash a few days before. The Afghans were told to lay down their arms and evacuate the district, and on their refusing to obey they were promptly attacked, and those who escaped from the Russian bullets were forced to disperse. Yanoff shortly afterwards moved southwards from Soma Tash, and occupied the Afghan village of Langar Kisht, within five miles of Kila Panjah—the capital of Wakhan—and he also placed an outpost at Bozai-Gumbaz for the purpose of watching the chief passes from Gilgit.

But while the Russians were thus establishing themselves throughout the whole of the Pamir region, and were appropriating tracts of country which had long been held by the Afghans or Chinese, serious events occurred in the Turkestan district which put an end to any further aggressive operations, and necessitated the withdrawal of the greater part of the troops which had been sent under Yanoff to the head waters of the Oxus. During the cholera epidemic at Tashkent in 1892, a serious insurrection broke out, and threatened to assume alarming proportions.

At this time the greater part of the troops belonging to the district were either with Yanoff in the Pamirs, or were concentrated close to the frontiers with a view to possible complications with the Afghans and Chinese ; and as it was absolutely necessary to strengthen the garrisons in the neighbourhood of the disaffected towns, orders were sent to Yanoff to return to Ferghana. The greater portion of the expeditionary force would no

doubt have had to be withdrawn before the winter set in, but the disturbances in Russian territory hastened their departure, and by the end of September 1892 the force returned to Margelan, a detachment of 165 men under a captain being left in a small fort on the Murghab to emphasise Russia's claim to the surrounding country.

These serious demonstrations in the Pamir region caused the British Foreign Office to enter into negotiations for the purpose of having the Russo-Afghan frontiers in that part of the world accurately defined; but as the negotiations have dragged on for many months without any basis having been laid down for a Joint Commission for the demarcation of the boundary, it appears only too probable that the Russians are repeating the tactics which they so successfully pursued in 1884-87; and it is very likely that in the near future awkward complications will arise on account of their aggressive designs on the country to the north of the Chitral State. In the meanwhile the Turkestan authorities are taking steps to strengthen their position by the construction of a new road to the Murghab Fort, and by the establishment of another post in the Alai Plateau; and from time to time sinister rumours obtain circulation as to the movement of Russian troops in the Pamirs.

For the present, however, the general feeling of uneasiness as to what Russia's next move will be has been somewhat allayed by statements made by Sir E. Grey in the House of Commons on May 2 and July 13, 1893, to the effect that Her Majesty's

Government 'have received a solemn promise from Russia in the most explicit terms that during the present year, and while negotiations are pending, no expedition whatever would be sent to the Pamirs.' It is sincerely to be hoped that this promise will be kept; but from previous examples of the value of Russian pledges, one is forced to confess that it would not be a cause for much astonishment if Russian troops were once more pushed forward into the debatable territory, in spite of the assurances so given. Excuses for such movements could readily be found, and the diplomatists on the Neva would find no difficulty in once again repeating the cry that they had been compelled to advance much against their wishes, and in spite of their intense desire to do nothing which might irritate or alarm their friends the English.

Nor is this Pamir question the only one which might lead to grave complications between England and Russia; for, although the north-western frontier of Afghanistan has only recently been defined, vexed questions have already arisen regarding the use by the Afghans and Russians respectively of the water of the various streams which flow from Afghan territory into the Czar's dominions. At the time of the Afghan Boundary Commission this irrigation question was carefully considered, and a settlement was then arrived at which was accepted by both parties; but, since then, complaints have been frequently made by the Russians that the Afghans had unduly tapped the streams, and that consequently an insufficient supply of water reached

the Turkoman settlements upon the northern side of the border. These complaints have recently assumed so serious an aspect, that the Viceroy of India sent Colonel Yate to inquire into the matter, in communication with an officer who has been similarly appointed by the Russian Government; but no information has yet been received as to the manner in which the dispute has been settled.

From this it will be seen that the Russians succeed in keeping up a perpetual state of tension all along the Afghan border. They always have two or three petty disputes ready at hand, which they can turn into serious questions whenever they particularly desire to annoy or disquiet the Indian authorities. They, moreover, have unlimited scope for intrigues with the petty chiefs and tribes on the frontier; and, although they have repeatedly promised to abstain from interference in Afghan affairs, and have declared that they will not communicate with the Amir of Kabul, they would find it difficult to deny that secret agents have recently been sent to the capital of Afghanistan.

Thus, as each year passes away, the dangers on the north-western frontiers of India gradually increase; and it is time that the people of England should awake to the fact that they have a precious inheritance left to their keeping, which is in danger of passing out of their possession unless they unanimously, and with no uncertain voice, declare that Russia has reached the limits of her empire in Central Asia, and must be forced to observe her engagements, and especially her promises that she

will not interfere in any way with the countries to the south of the limitary line fixed by the Agreement of 1873. If peace is to be maintained, and if the Czar's Government do not desire to kindle a disastrous and deplorable war, which would echo and re-echo for years throughout the wild countries of Central Asia, and would leave traces which could not be wiped out by centuries of subsequent peace—if the Czar honestly desires peace, these promises must be kept. England never will, nor will she ever have any desire to, advance across the line of demarcation agreed upon in 1873, nor will she, unless forced by the greatest political necessity, ever advance into any portion of Afghanistan.

Let this be clearly understood ; but let it also be known that the British people have made up their minds that the complete independence of Afghanistan from any form of Russian interference is essentially necessary for the peace and safety of their Eastern Empire, and that they will, if necessary, take up arms to prevent the slightest violation of the Amir's dominions. England has no intention of interfering with, or advancing into, the countries beyond the Oxus, and will use her influence to induce the Amir to abstain from aggression ; but she claims—and her claim has been recognised by Russia—that she has the right to preserve order and peace in Afghanistan. If the Amir, carried away by a sense of his own importance, or cherishing the hope of foreign assistance, displays any hostility towards the Indian Government, or commits acts which are incon-

sistent with his position as the ruler of a protected State, England has every right to interfere, and if necessary to replace him by a chief who would prove more tractable; and there is no more reason why such action should alarm or irritate Russia, than that the English should take offence if the Czar's Government should see fit to depose a Bokharan Amir who proved himself to be notoriously hostile to Russian interests.

If the Czar's Government honestly abide by their agreements, and refrain from petty intrigues and filibustering expeditions beyond their frontiers, then there will be peace; but if they wantonly violate their promises, and interfere with the States to the south of the limitary line agreed upon in 1873, then war must ensue—a war not of England's seeking, but one forced upon her in defence of the glorious Empire she has built up, and in which she will be able to prove that she has not yet lost her vigour, and is able to defend her interests as well as she did in the early days of the present century.

CONCLUSION

IN the preceding pages an attempt has been made to place before the reader a brief description of the manner in which Russia has gradually pushed forward through the wild countries in the Heart of Asia until she has at last established herself within striking distance of the outposts of the Indian Empire; and it may now be well to consider to what extent British interests in Asia are endangered by this Muscovite advance, and to note how those interests can be safeguarded in the future.

Thirty years ago, when it first became known in England that the Czar's troops were engaged in serious military operations against the Khanates of Khokand and Bokhara, there were many people who professed to believe that Russia was forced to advance in Asia in spite of herself, and who loudly proclaimed that such advances were to be looked upon as a matter for congratulation, as 'the blessings of civilisation' would thereby be showered down upon the barbarous inhabitants of those little known regions. These persons scoffed at the fears and warnings of experts; those who held contrary opinions were set down as 'visionaries;' soldiers who had devoted their lives to the maintenance of British supremacy in the East, and who

advocated the adoption of precautionary measures for the defence of India, were credited with personal and ambitious motives; and the policy of 'masterly inactivity' was in full swing.

The control of Indian affairs was at that time entrusted to a statesman who had rendered conspicuous service to his country during the dark days of the Indian Mutiny, and whose position among Anglo-Indian administrators was of such an exceptional nature that his opinions regarding Central Asian affairs generally passed unchallenged. When this popular Viceroy stated that he was 'not at all certain that Russia might not prove a safer ally, a better neighbour to India, than the Mahommedan races of Central Asia,'¹ and steadfastly set his face against any interference with the States on the north-western frontier of India, the disciples of the 'do-nothing' school became confirmed in their beliefs, and few of them paused to inquire whether it was indeed true that the extension of Russian power to the borders of India would add to the peace and prosperity of the native population of that country, or whether the near approach of a great European Power would not, on the contrary, give rise to a state of unrest and sense of insecurity which would necessarily tend to check the development of the country and cause great embarrassment to the Government of that great dependency.

These would-be philanthropists, while welcom-

¹ See 'Papers relating to Central Asia and Quetta,' published by order of the House of Commons, February 25, 1878, p. 41.

ing the possible extension of civilisation among the scattered inhabitants of Central Asia, failed to realise that although the few in Turkestan might receive some benefit, there was also a grave possibility that the multitudes in India might lose all they had already gained, and that the Empire which for more than a hundred years had enjoyed the blessings of the 'pax Britannica' might become a field for wide-spread intrigues and the theatre of a desolating war which would destroy much of the good which had been brought about by years of careful administration.

These followers of 'masterly inactivity,' while asserting that the Russians had been compelled to advance against their will, never seriously considered whether there was any paramount necessity which obliged the Muscovites in the first instance to cross the hundreds of miles of barren steppes which separated them from Khiva and Khokand, or whether it was true that the Russians were unwillingly forced to seize the Khokandian forts of Ak-Mechet, Aulie-ata, Hazret-i-Turkestan, and Chimkent.¹ They failed to grasp the important fact that although these barren deserts afforded the Russians an excellent barrier against serious attacks from the powerful Central-Asian Khanates, and prevented that contact with barbarous States

¹ While considering this point, it will also be well to inquire whether Russia seized Ashurada and Krasnovodsk merely from civilising and commercial motives, or whether she did not rather do so with a view to further aggression, and with the full intention of extending her empire at the expense of Persia and the various petty tribes and States between the Caspian Sea and India.

which inevitably leads to continued conflicts and extension of territory, the Russians nevertheless deliberately decided to cast aside that natural defence, and after moving across the Kirghiz Steppes, provoked collisions with the independent races to the south, who,—bitterly resenting the seizure of their strong places—naturally resisted until they had been completely crushed by the superior power of the intruder.

It is possible that these simple-minded defenders of the Russian advance would have been very much surprised if they had been told that they were unwittingly acting the part of Russian agents, and were merely repeating excuses which originated, not in their own minds, but in that of Prince Gortchakoff. If they, however, will carefully study the clever circular despatch issued by Prince Gortchakoff on November 21, 1864, they will there find all the arguments which they have so frequently forced on the attention of the English people, and they will thus see that they have merely been acting as the mouth-pieces of the Russian Foreign Office, which has always found many credulous Englishmen ready to champion the cause of Russia.

These excuses for the Russian movements in Central Asia, however, fulfilled their purpose for many years, by lulling the suspicions of the English and by thus enabling Russia to move forward step by step towards the goal of her ambitions. But when these pretexts had done their duty, and it was found that they would no

longer obtain credence, a fresh theory was started—again in Russia—and was speedily seized upon by that section of the British public which knows but little about Eastern affairs, cares less, and is ready to accept any plausible excuse for ‘putting off the evil day.’ This last explanation of Russia’s advance is to the effect that Russia does not want India, but merely wishes to get as close to the borders of that country as possible, in order that she might paralyse the action of Great Britain in the event of complications in Eastern Europe. In other words, Russia wants a free and uncontrolled passage into the Mediterranean, and will make a demonstration against India if England attempts to interfere; but if she be permitted to hold Constantinople and the Dardanelles—and she won’t be content with one without the other—she will then cry ‘Quits,’ and trouble India no more.

Now this is at first sight a very plausible theory; but we take leave to doubt the accuracy of this view of Russian policy, and hope to be able to show that the surrender of the Straits would be of no avail in bringing about permanent peace between England and Russia, but, on the contrary, would enable the latter Power to prosecute her designs against India with a far greater prospect of ultimate success.

It must be borne in mind that Russian trading vessels can at the present moment freely pass between the Mediterranean and Black Sea ports, and that so long as Russia abstains from war this state of affairs will continue, and Russian commerce

can go on developing without let or hindrance. But this is not sufficient for the Russians. They desire to be independent of the goodwill of the Porte, and object to be hampered by irksome restrictions with regard to their war vessels; and they wish to gain complete command over the Straits so as to be able to close them against possible enemies, and in order that their Black Sea fleet may be available for use in the Mediterranean. In other words, Russia wishes to turn the Black Sea into a Russian lake which would form a secure base for further operations in the Mediterranean; and if she were to achieve this object, what would then be her position with respect to India? Simply this: She would be established in a well-nigh impregnable position on the flank of the shortest route from England to the East, and would seriously menace British supremacy in the Mediterranean; she would have made a great stride towards obtaining a footing on the trade route by which the commerce of the East has always found its way to European markets; and she would have rendered it almost impossible for England (in the event of war) to attack her in her most vulnerable points, viz. in the Caucasus and on the Black Sea coasts.

Such, then, would be the situation if the Straits were surrendered to Russia in return for her promise to abstain from further threatening advances towards our Indian Empire. And what guarantee is there that any such promise would be kept? In the preceding pages it has been shown how

Russian pledges have been broken one after another for the past thirty years, and there is surely no one so credulous as to believe, in spite of these examples, that Russia would abstain from making a final attempt to secure the prize she has so long and so perseveringly sought after, even if she were to make a hundred promises to that effect.

And even if we allow that the Russian nation would honestly desire to abide by the terms of such a covenant, it must be remembered that the very extent and continuous expansion of the Russian Empire is a factor which cannot be ignored. From the shores of the Caspian Sea to far distant Corea there are scores of points at which Russian interests clash with those of Great Britain, to say nothing of the serious jealousies and complications which would inevitably arise if the Russians gained a footing in the Mediterranean, and were thus in a position to effectively interfere in the affairs of Syria, Egypt, and Northern Africa. With so many loopholes for quarrelling we surely could not be certain that we should not, at some future period, find ourselves drawn into a war with Russia in defence of vital interests; and then what would become of the promise? Could we expect Russia still to adhere to her covenant, and refrain from making an attack on India, which is the only point where she could seriously injure us? No, certainly not; and it would be well, therefore, if we once and for all recognise the fact that we cannot purchase permanent peace for India by any such surrender.

In Russian eyes India and Constantinople are intimately connected with each other. They want possession of both ; and while they hope, by threatening India, to shake the resolution of Englishmen, and thus pave the way for the occupation of the shores of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles, they also are keenly alive to the fact that once they become masters of those Straits, their subsequent efforts for the establishment of an empire in Southern Asia would be greatly simplified. In one version of the so-called Will of Peter the Great¹ there are the following words : ‘ Approach as near as possible to Constantinople and India. He who establishes himself in those two places will be the true sovereign of the world ; ’ and we hold to the belief that whether these words were written by the great Czar or had their origin in the fertile brain of Napoleon Bonaparte, they form the keynote of Russian policy in the East at the present moment.

Believing then, as we do, that the time is not far distant when the Russians will make a further move towards the Indus, either for the purpose of contesting our supremacy in the East, or in order that they might approach as close as possible to our frontiers before they make their final spring ; being confronted, as we undoubtedly are, by the possibility—nay, the probability—of such a dangerous development of the Central Asian question, we maintain that it is high time that the people of

¹ See ‘ *Mémoires du Chevalier d'Eon*, ’ par Frédéric Gaillardet. Deuxième édition. Paris, 1856.

England should decide whether they can permit the Cossacks to come any closer to the Indian frontiers without endangering the safety of that great dependency, or whether they should not rather make up their minds to resist any further encroachments on the part of Russia by every possible means in their power. They must ask themselves whether they are resolved if needs be to enter into a bitter struggle with Russia in defence of the glorious empire which their forefathers have built up, or if they will decline such a contest, and by so doing confess before the world that they are unworthy of the great trust which has been committed to their care.

The Russian frontiers at present march side by side with those of Afghanistan from the Heri-Rud on the west to Chinese Turkestan on the east; and what guarantee have we got that this frontier line will be respected by the Power which has so systematically attacked and subdued all the petty States and tribes to the north of the Amir's dominions? It is true that we have Russia's promise that she will respect the integrity of Afghanistan, and will abstain from all interference in the affairs of that State; but how can we place any reliance on such promises when we have before us so many instances of pledges which have been violated by Russia whenever it suited her purpose to make a fresh move towards India? The Czar's Government declared in 1864 that they had reached a limit beyond which they would not advance; and did they keep within that limit? They promised to

restore Samarkand to the Amir of Bokhara. Did they do so? They declared that they had no intention of occupying Khiva or Merv. Was not a large slice of Khivan territory wrested from the helpless Khan, and is not a Russian garrison now located in the oasis on the Murghab? And did not the Russians also despatch an ambassador with a considerable escort to the Court of Shere Ali in spite of their repeated promise not to interfere in Afghan affairs or even to send agents to the Amir's capital? These are a few examples out of the many which could be quoted, if necessary, to show that Russian promises are absolutely worthless as a guarantee against further aggression on their part.

And, on the other hand, we know that the Russians have, for many years past, questioned the Afghan Amir's sovereign rights over Afghan-Turkestan, and have hinted that the true frontier between the British and Russian spheres of action in Asia should be defined by the Hindu Kush range. This contention, which was at first put forward in a halting manner, has recently assumed more definite shape; and while Russian writers at the present time take no pains to conceal the fact that Russia means, if possible, to extend her authority throughout the country lying between the Hindu Kush and River Oxus, they even go so far as to dispute England's exclusive right to control Afghan policy, and refer to a Russian occupation of Herat as an event which must take place in due course. We thus see that while the diplo-

matists on the Neva are nominally bound by their promises to England, but in reality are merely waiting for a convenient opportunity for the next move, public opinion in Russia is gradually being accustomed to the idea that Afghan-Turkestan and Herat must inevitably become Russian possessions, and that England will be powerless to prevent it, but will have to bow before accomplished facts.

Have Englishmen, then, made up their minds as to what should be done in the event of Russia making such a move, either on Herat or against Afghan-Turkestan, or—as is more probable—on both provinces simultaneously? Have they formed any opinion as to the best means of counteracting the great blow which would thus be struck against our vital interests in the East? The time for forming some decision regarding this matter cannot be much longer delayed; and if the safety and welfare of the Indian Empire is not to be subordinated and sacrificed to party interests at home, it is not only necessary that a definite line of policy should be adopted with regard to Central Asian affairs, but it is also imperative that the line of conduct so determined should be steadfastly adhered to, and should not be dependent on the passing fancies of each successive administration.

Now, in order to more fully understand the situation, let us, for a moment, consider what would be our position if we were to permit the Russians to move across the northern frontiers of

Afghanistan and establish themselves in Herat or Afghan-Turkestan.

In the first place, it must be remembered that by such an invasion of the Amir's dominions, Russia would not only have conclusively demonstrated—if such further proof be necessary—that her pledges are of no avail in restraining her onward march towards India; but if England were then to take no steps to expel the intruders, her inaction would be attributed to fear. Among the native populations of India and Afghanistan this fact alone would produce a condition of alarm and mistrust which would seriously accentuate the difficulties of our position; in every bazaar and hamlet in the East it would be whispered that the days of the great British 'Raj' were numbered; and malcontents, and many waverers also, who might otherwise have thrown in their lot with us, would prepare to declare themselves in favour of our rivals.

And while our position in India would be sorely shaken by the adoption of such half-hearted policy, would our position with regard to Afghanistan be any better? We should have to either occupy the eastern and south-eastern portions of that country, or else try to erect a 'buffer State' out of the remnants which Russia had left. And what prospect would there be of raising up a new and stable Afghan kingdom out of the wreck of the old one? The British Government has repeatedly stated that they would permit no foreign interference in Afghan affairs, and have declared that

they would resist all encroachments on the Amir's dominions. This has been the avowed policy of Great Britain ever since the days of Dost Mahomed; and although our policy towards the rulers of the kingdom of Kabul has been subject to many variations, and has passed through all the changes from studied indifference to unprofitable interference, still it has invariably been affirmed that Afghanistan must be kept free from Russian influence. Were we, therefore, to countenance a Muscovite occupation of any portion of the Amir's dominions, we should not only appear before the Afghan people as a nation which abandoned a time-honoured policy rather than run the risk of a collision with Russia, but we should also stand condemned for having betrayed and deserted them in their hour of need.

With the Afghans in such a frame of mind would there be any reasonable prospect of our being able to erect an efficient barrier out of the remnants of the kingdom of Kabul? And even if such a 'buffer State' could be maintained for a few years, would it be 'the strong and friendly Power on our north-western frontiers,' which so many statesmen have declared it to be our true policy to establish? Having by our actions confessed our inability to uphold the integrity of the Amir's dominions, how could we possibly expect to succeed in the construction of a more lasting and more reliable obstacle to Russia's advance out of the fragments of Afghanistan which the White Czar might be pleased to leave to us? It would

be a fruitless—nay, an impossible—task. With a disquieted population in India, and with a turbulent and resentful people on our borders, no Government in India could possibly hope to construct a new, lasting, and friendly Afghan kingdom out of the wreck of the old one.

And even if the existence of such a 'buffer State' were found to be possible, we could not expect to exercise the same degree of control over its external relations as we now exert over the foreign policy of the Amir Abdur Rahman. The country now known by the name of Afghanistan would have disappeared from off the map of Asia, and a new State would have come into being, with regard to which the Russians would no longer be fettered by any promises of non-intervention. The new order of things would be followed by a corresponding change in Russia's policy. She would no longer be hampered by any irksome pledges of non-interference in the affairs of our trumpety 'buffer State,' and would be careful to abstain from entering into any inconvenient contracts; and thus, instead of a united Afghanistan under British control, we should have a puny principality on our borders, not solely under the influence of the Indian Government, but under the dual control of England and Russia. It is surely unnecessary to comment on the conditions of disorder and perpetual unrest which would be inherent in such an arrangement.

And would our position be improved if we were to take possession of the provinces of Kabul

and Kandahar, and thus join with Russia in a partition of Afghanistan? By the adoption of such a line of action we should no doubt make it clear to the people of India that we had at last determined to place a limit to Russia's advance, and were resolved to beat back the tide of invasion before it reached the plains of the Punjaub. They would thus gain confidence, and in proportion as their belief in our power increased so would the danger of troubles in our rear diminish; and such a step would therefore tend to minimise the difficulties of the Indian Government so far as the internal administration of the country is concerned. And, as compared with the establishment of a new 'buffer State' in Eastern and South-Eastern Afghanistan, a British occupation of Kabul and Kandahar would possess the one other advantage that, instead of having a weak and unstable native State on our borders, exposed to the machinations of Muscovite agents who have invariably proved themselves to be adepts in the concoction of cunningly devised political plots, we should, by our presence in the country, be in a position to observe, and in a measure to counteract, any Russian attempts to intrigue with the local chiefs and tribesmen.

But although our position in India might be somewhat improved by such a forward move, would we not raise up for ourselves fresh trials and burdens in Afghanistan? Reference has already been made to the dangerous effect which would be produced in the minds of the Afghan people if we were to countenance a Russian occupation

of any portion of the Amir's dominions, in spite of our repeated declarations that we should permit no foreign interference in the affairs of that State. But great as would be their resentment if we failed to adhere to our avowed policy, and deserted them in their time of trouble, it would be increased a hundredfold if we were to join with Russia in the dismemberment of their country. We should be considered to be nothing better than a nation of tricksters, whose promises were worthless, and who were ready and willing to sacrifice our allies and our good name for the sake of territorial aggrandisement. Our first and second Afghan wars would be brought forward as evidence against us. It would be said that we had merely entered upon those campaigns for the purpose of gaining possession of the country, and that having been twice foiled by the stubborn resistance of the Afghan people, we had at last decided to join hands with the nation we had so frequently denounced in order to achieve our object. Such, and similar ideas—fostered, as they probably would be, by the secret teachings of Russian emissaries—would take deep root in the minds of the people, and we should soon begin to experience all the difficulties of our situation. It must be remembered that we should have to deal with the more turbulent and fanatical portion of the population of Afghanistan, and while the Russians were settling down with their new Herati subjects and with the Usbegs of Afghan-Turkestan, we should find it a far more arduous task to govern the descendants of the

mountaineers who gave us so much trouble on former occasions. A large and permanent increase to our Indian army—especially in the British element—would be unavoidable, and our financial burdens and political responsibilities would be increased to an incalculable extent.

And there is one other point to be considered. Whether we decided to establish a new 'buffer State' or determined to assume direct control over Eastern and South-Eastern Afghanistan, we should be confronted by the great problem of the settlement of the frontiers of the newly acquired Russian possessions. And how is this problem to be solved? We know that three years were spent over the recent delimitation of the north-western frontiers of Afghanistan between the Heri-Rud and River Oxus, and we also know that although two years have been occupied in the interchange of communications between the British and Russian Governments regarding the Pamir Question, no satisfactory understanding has yet been arrived at; and such being the case, what prospect would there be of the speedy demarcation of a boundary extending from Beluchistan on the south to the Pamir plateau on the north, and passing for the most part through little-known and imperfectly explored regions? Why, it would take years before even the general direction of the line was agreed upon, to say nothing of the disputes and delays which would inevitably arise while the details were being worked out on the ground. The conduct of the Russians during the last

Boundary Commission affords a clear warning of what we should have to expect if we were ever so foolish as to attempt the joint delimitation of a new frontier such as that to which we now refer. Flushed with their success in having at last gained possession of Herat, they would insist on the new boundary being fixed in accordance with their wishes, and unless we were prepared to make good our claims by force of arms, we should either have to abandon the task altogether and leave the frontier undefined, or permit it to be laid down in accordance with the dictates of Russia.

It is possible that our position would be rendered somewhat less difficult if we were to steer a middle course, and were to occupy the Kandahar province only, a native ruler being still maintained on the throne of Kabul. As compared with the policy of remaining behind our existing frontiers and striving to preserve the remnants of the Amir's dominions as a 'buffer State,' or in comparison even with a British occupation of the whole of Eastern and South-Eastern Afghanistan, such a course would no doubt possess some advantages. By its adoption we should still show that we intended to bar Russia's further progress, and as this would denote confidence in our own strength there would be less danger of tumults in India; we should still be in a better position to counteract Russian intrigues than if we were to remain behind our present frontiers; we should secure Kandahar without burdening ourselves with the government of the more turbulent and

unprofitable portion of Eastern Afghanistan; and we should, moreover, be able to gradually prepare the way for an eventual occupation of the Kabul province in case we found the continuance of native rule to be detrimental to our interests.

But although this last alternative would seem to be better than the others which have been referred to, we believe that no half measures will prove successful in warding off the blow which Russia intends, sooner or later, to strike against our Empire in the East. She has repeatedly promised to respect the frontiers of Afghanistan, and we have as frequently made it known that we shall permit no violation of the Amir's dominions. It is our true policy to see that these promises are kept, and if we fail to do so we shall only have ourselves to blame if the Afghan people turn to Russia when they find that we are unable or unwilling to protect them. If we permit the Cossacks to occupy Herat or Afghan-Turkestan, we must not be surprised if the belief gains ground in India that we were powerless to prevent it, and it is needless to dwell on what the difficulties of our position would be if such opinions unfortunately began to take root in the minds of the people.

In former years it was frequently said that the further Russia advanced into Central Asia the weaker she would become, owing to extended communications and the hostility of the tribes she would encounter during her progress. But who can now say that Russia's power for threatening India is less than it was at any former period?

The people who started this theory seemed to imagine that Russia was going to send her armies across unexplored deserts and mountain ranges with a reckless disregard of the most ordinary military and political precautions; while, as a matter of fact, she has continued her advance with a remarkable degree of caution and deliberation, and has not only secured her communications with her base, but has also looked to her lateral supports, and has been careful not to make any fresh move until she has first consolidated her existing position.

To quote the words of the late Sir Henry Rawlinson: 'Anyone who traces the movements of Russia towards India on the map of Asia cannot fail to be struck with the resemblance which these movements bear to the operations of an army opening parallels against a beleaguered fortress.' She has advanced, and is still advancing, towards India, not after the manner in which an army assaults a position in the field, but with the care and deliberation with which a skilled general conducts the siege of a strong fortress. One after another the physical obstacles which were supposed to form an almost impassable barrier to her advance have all been passed; the vast deserts have been left miles behind by the Cossacks; the 'gigantic snow-clad mountains' of the Paropamisus have, on better acquaintance, dwindled into an insignificant range of sandstone hills, and instead of our being able to point to the thousands of miles of unexplored wastes which formerly intervened between the Indian and Russian frontiers, we now know that there are

but 500 miles remaining between our advanced posts in the Pishin Valley and those of the Russians in Badghis.

Are we, then, going to let Russia continue her march until this last remaining interval between her frontiers and India shall have entirely disappeared? Are we going to cast aside all our advantages in the vain hope of securing permanent peace, or rather in order that we might 'put off the evil day'? Those 500 miles of country which still separate the Cossack from the Sepoy are of the greatest importance in that they secure us from surprise, and, by keeping Russian agents at a distance, prevent them from disturbing the peace of India by their secret intrigues. But, above all, it must be remembered that so long as we prevent the Russians from permanently establishing themselves in Herat or any other portion of Afghanistan, our Indian troops will, in the event of war, possess the inestimable advantage of being able to oppose, in selected positions, an army which has had to undergo long and toilsome marches, exposed throughout to the harassing attacks of local tribesmen.

If we, however, permit Russia to absorb the northern and western provinces of Afghanistan, these advantages will disappear, and any short respite we might gain by such fatuous policy would be completely neutralised by the new dangers and difficulties we should have to face. Whether we then moved forward into Eastern Afghanistan or remained behind our present frontiers, the result would be disastrous. Our Indian army would have

to be greatly increased, large sums would have to be spent on new fortifications and other defensive measures, and to meet this additional expenditure on warlike preparations, fresh burdens would have to be imposed on the people. And to what purpose? We should be discredited in the eyes of the Afghan nation; the people of India would begin to doubt our power; and Russia would be in a more favourable position, either to invade India, or to shake our power by means of intrigue. She would construct railways to the extreme limits of her possessions; large garrisons would be established at strategical points close to her frontiers; and then, when it suited her to make a fresh move, our soldiers, instead of encountering an exhausted army, would find themselves confronted by troops who had been exposed to no greater hardships than they had themselves experienced.

There is one important factor in the case which has not yet been considered, viz.: the attitude of the Afghan people; and it may be asked whether it would still be our best policy to oppose a Muscovite occupation of Northern and Western Afghanistan even if the Afghans were on Russia's side, or if it would not be wiser to wait until we could make sure of their co-operation or neutrality. Now, we may be perfectly certain of one thing, and that is that the Afghans will never be able to maintain an attitude of neutrality in the event of a conflict between England and Russia in Central Asia. They will have to choose between the contending parties, and will either fight on our side

in defence of their kingdom, or join with Russia in the hope of obtaining some share in the plunder of India. If we then fail to observe our engagements towards them, and if we shrink from supporting them in the defence of their kingdom, are they ever likely to forget our desertion and range themselves on our side? And if they were to turn against us when we offer to preserve their country from foreign invasion, could we possibly rely on their assistance after they had been exposed to Russian propagandism and after they had become accustomed to Russian rule? We think not. Our best chance of gaining the assistance of the Afghan people is by displaying confidence in our own strength, and in steadfastly resolving to preserve their kingdom from Russian occupation. If they prove unwilling to assist us in repelling such an invasion of their country, they will never help us in the defence of India, but under Russian influence will rather prove to be an additional danger, and it would therefore be madness for us to allow Russia to take up a position on our frontiers merely because the Afghans might prove to be hostile, and in the vain hope of obtaining their aid at some later period.

Such, then, are the dangers to be expected from any further approximation of the Russian and Indian frontiers; and such are the difficulties we should have to face if we were to permit Russia to violate the Amir's dominions. For the reasons we have given above, we believe it to be England's true policy to make any Russian invasion of

Afghanistan a *casus belli*, and, in the event of her crossing the frontiers of that State, to wage war against her in all parts of the world until she is forced to abandon her aggressive purpose. Such a war would indeed be a deplorable catastrophe, which can only be contemplated with a repugnance almost amounting to horror ; but however dreadful and far-reaching the consequences of such struggle might be, they could be no worse than those which would be attendant on the similar struggle which must inevitably be forced on us at a later period if we abandon all the advantages of position we now possess. The conflict would then be far more bitter, of longer duration, and more far-reaching, for, as our dangers and difficulties increased, we should be compelled to put forces into motion which we might otherwise shrink from utilising.

If Russia violates Afghan territory and attempts to establish herself in Northern or Western Afghanistan, she will only do so for one of two reasons. She will do so either for the purpose of directly contesting our supremacy in India, or in order that she might obtain a more favourable position for attacking us at some later period. If she wishes for peace, if she honestly desires to introduce order, civilisation, and commercial prosperity into Central Asia, she has sufficient scope and ample opportunities in her wide empire for so doing without going farther afield, and without making aggressive movements which can only provoke war, and must inevitably produce a condition of the wildest anarchy throughout all the coun-

tries in the Heart of Asia. If she abstains from interference in Afghan affairs we are not likely to meddle with the tribes and people within her sphere of action, but will rather welcome the increased prosperity and good order which are to be expected from the introduction into Central Asia of Western ideas and a more stable form of government; but if she is not content with her position, and if she steps beyond the limit which she herself has agreed to respect, then we must be careful to preserve our great Eastern dependency from her disturbing influence, and for this purpose it will be necessary to strike her in her most vulnerable points, and shake her power while her Asiatic armies are marching across the space which still intervenes between her frontiers and the positions we intend to defend.

It is not the intention here to say where those positions should be, and it would be useless to attempt to lay down any hard and fast rule as to where our Indian armies should make their first stand against the invaders, for the nature and extent of our offensive and defensive measures must necessarily be dependent on numerous and complicated circumstances. But whether we meet them beyond the Passes, or strike them as they struggle through the difficult defiles on our frontiers, the defence of India will be greatly simplified if the people of England will be true to themselves, and resolutely make up their minds to actively oppose any further Russian advance towards our great Eastern Empire.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

The Will of Peter the Great, as given in 'Des Progrès de la Puissance Russe' by M. Lesur ; published in Paris in 1812.

I. NEGLECT nothing which can introduce European manners and customs into Russia, and with this object gain the co-operation of the various Courts, and especially the learned men of Europe, by means of interesting speculations, by philanthropic and philosophical principles, or by any other suitable means.

II. Maintain the State in a condition of perpetual war in order that the troops may be inured to warfare and so that the whole nation may always be kept in training and ready to march at the first signal. *

III. Extend our dominions by every possible means towards the north along the Baltic, as well as towards the south along the shores of the Black Sea ; and for this purpose :—

IV. Excite the jealousy of England, Denmark and Brandenburg against the Swedes, by means of which those powers will disregard any encroachments which we may then make on that State, and which we will end by subjugating.

V. Interest the House of Austria in the expulsion of the Turks from Europe, and under this pretext maintain a permanent army and establish dockyards on the shores

of the Black Sea, and thus by ever moving forwards we will eventually reach Constantinople.

VI. Keep up a state of anarchy in Poland ; influence its national assemblies, and above all regulate the elections of its kings ; split it up on every occasion that presents itself ; and finally subjugate it.

VII. Enter into a close alliance with England, and maintain direct relations with her by means of a good commercial treaty ; allow her even to exercise a certain monopoly in the interior of the State, so that a good understanding may by degrees be established between the English merchants and sailors and ours, who on their part are in favour of everything which tends to perfect and increase the Russian Navy, by aid of which it is necessary to at once strive for mastery over the Baltic and in the Black Sea—the keystone on which the speedy success of the scheme depends.

VIII. Bear in mind that the commerce of India is the commerce of the World, and that he who can exclusively control it is the dictator of Europe ; no occasion should therefore be lost to provoke war with Persia, to hasten its decay, to advance to the Persian Gulf, and then to endeavour to re-establish the ancient trade of the Levant through Syria.

IX. Always interfere, either by force of arms or by intrigue, in the quarrels of the European Powers, and especially in those of Germany ; and with this object :—

X. Seek after and constantly maintain an alliance with Austria ; encourage her in her favourite idea of national predominance ; profit by the slightest ascendancy gained over her to entangle her in disastrous wars, so that she may gradually be weakened ; even help her sometimes ; but incessantly stir up against her the enmity of the whole of Europe and particularly that of Germany, by rousing the jealousy and mistrust of the German princes.

XI. Always select wives for Russian princes from among the German Princesses ; so that by thus multiply-

ing alliances based on close relationship and mutual interest we will increase our influence over that Empire.

XII. Make use of the power of the Church over the disunited and schismatical Greeks who are scattered over Hungary, Turkey, and the southern parts of Poland; gain them over by every possible means; pose as their protectors; and establish a claim to religious supremacy over them. Under this pretext, and with their help, Turkey will be conquered, and Poland, being unable any longer to stand alone, either by its own strength or by means of its political connections, will voluntarily place itself in subjection to us.

XIII. From that time every moment will be precious. All our batteries must be secretly prepared to strike the great blow, and so that they can act with such order, precision, and rapidity, as to give Europe no time for preparation. The first step will be to propose very secretly, separately, and with the greatest circumspection, first to the Court of Versailles and then to that of Vienna, to divide with one of them the Empire of the World; and by mentioning that Russia is virtually ruler of the Eastern World and has nothing to gain but the title, this proposal will probably not rouse their suspicion. It is undoubted that this project cannot fail to please them; and a war to the knife will be kindled between them which will soon become general, both on account of the connections and widespread relationships between these two rival Courts and natural enemies, and because of the interests which will compel the other powers of Europe to take part in the struggle.

XIV. In the midst of this general discord, Russia will be asked for help, first by one and then by another of the belligerent powers; and after having hesitated long enough to give them time to exhaust themselves and to enable her to assemble her own armies, she will at last appear to decide in favour of the House of Austria, and while she pushes her regular troops forward to the Rhine, she will at once follow them up with the hordes of Asia; and as

they advance into Germany, two large fleets filled with a portion of these same hordes must set sail, one from the Sea of Azoff and the other from the port of Archangel, under convoy of war vessels from the Black Sea and Baltic; they will suddenly appear in the Mediterranean and Northern Ocean and inundate Italy, Spain, and France, with these fierce and rapacious nomads, who will plunder a portion of the inhabitants, carry off others into slavery to re-people the deserts of Siberia, and render the remainder incapable of escaping from our yoke. All these distractions will afford such great opportunities to the regular troops that they will be able to act with a degree of energy and precision which will ensure the subjugation of the rest of Europe.

APPENDIX II

Circular Despatch addressed by Prince Gortchakoff to Russian Representatives abroad : dated 21st of November, 1864.

St. Petersburg, November 21, 1864.

The Russian newspapers have given an account of the last military operations executed by a detachment of our troops in the regions of Central Asia with remarkable success and important results. It was to be foreseen that these events would the more attract the attention of the foreign public that their scene was laid in scarcely known countries.

Our august Master has commanded me to state to you briefly, but with clearness and precision, the position in which we find ourselves in Central Asia, the interests which inspire us in those countries, and the end which we have in view.

The position of Russia in Central Asia is that of all civilised States which are brought into contact with

half-savage, nomad populations, possessing no fixed social organisation.

In such cases it always happens that the more civilised State is forced, in the interest of the security of its frontier and its commercial relations, to exercise a certain ascendancy over those whom their turbulent and unsettled character make most undesirable neighbours.

First, there are raids and acts of pillage to be put down. To put a stop to them, the tribes on the frontier have to be reduced to a state of more or less perfect submission. This result once attained, these tribes take to more peaceful habits, but are in their turn exposed to the attacks of the more distant tribes.

The State is bound to defend them against these depredations, and to punish those who commit them. Hence the necessity of distant, costly, and periodically recurring expeditions against an enemy whom his social organisation makes it impossible to seize. If, the robbers once punished, the expedition is withdrawn, the lesson is soon forgotten ; its withdrawal is put down to weakness. It is a peculiarity of Asiatics to respect nothing but visible and palpable force ; the moral force of reason and of the interests of civilisation has as yet no hold upon them. The work has then always to be done over again from the beginning.

In order to put a stop to this state of permanent disorder, fortified posts are established in the midst of these hostile tribes, and an influence is brought to bear upon them which reduces them by degrees to a state of more or less forced submission. But soon beyond this second line other still more distant tribes come in their turn to threaten the same dangers and necessitate the same measures of repression. The State thus finds itself forced to choose one of two alternatives, either to give up this endless labour and to abandon its frontier to perpetual disturbance, rendering all prosperity, all security, all civilisation an impossibility, or, on the other hand, to plunge deeper and

deeper into barbarous countries, where the difficulties and expenses increase with every step in advance.

Such has been the fate of every country which has found itself in a similar position. The United States in America, France in Algeria, Holland in her Colonies, England in India—all have been irresistibly forced, less by ambition than by imperious necessity, into this onward march, where the greatest difficulty is to know when to stop.

Such too have been the reasons which have led the Imperial Government to take up at first a position resting on one side on the Syr-Daria, on the other on the Lake Issik-Kul, and to strengthen these two lines by advanced forts, which, little by little, have crept on into the heart of those distant regions, without however succeeding in establishing on the other side of our frontiers that tranquillity which is indispensable for their security.

The explanation of this unsettled state of things is to be found, first, in the fact that, between the extreme points of this double line, there is an immense unoccupied space, where all attempts at colonisation or caravan trade are paralysed by the inroads of the robber tribes; and, in the second place, in the perpetual fluctuations of the political condition of those countries, where Turkestan and Khokand, sometimes united, sometimes at variance, always at war, either with one another or with Bokhara, presented no chance of settled relations or of any regular transactions whatever.

The Imperial Government thus found itself, in spite of all its efforts, in the dilemma we have above alluded to, that is to say, compelled either to permit the continuance of a state of permanent disorder, paralysing to all security and progress, or to condemn itself to costly and distant expeditions, leading to no practical result, and with the work always to be done anew; or, lastly, to enter upon the undefined path of conquest and annexation which has given to England the empire of India, by attempting the

subjugation by armed force, one after another, of the small independent states whose habits of pillage and turbulence and whose perpetual revolts leave their neighbours neither peace nor repose.

Neither of these alternative courses was in accordance with the object of our august Master's policy, which consists, not in extending beyond all reasonable bounds the regions under his sceptre, but in giving a solid basis to his rule, in guaranteeing their security, and in developing their social organisation, their commerce, their well-being, and their civilisation.

Our task was, therefore, to discover a system adapted to the attainment of this threefold object.

The following principles have, in consequence, been laid down:—

1. It has been judged to be indispensable that our two fortified frontier lines—one extending from China to the lake Issik-Kul, the other from the Sea of Aral along the Syr-Daria, should be united by fortified points, so that all our posts should be in a position of mutual support, leaving no gap through which the nomad tribes might make with impunity their inroads and depredations.

2. It was essential that the line of our advanced forts thus completed should be situated in a country fertile enough, not only to insure their supplies, but also to facilitate the regular colonisation, which alone can prepare a future of stability and prosperity for the occupied country, by gaining over the neighbouring populations to civilized life.

- 3, and lastly. It was urgent to lay down this line definitely, so as to escape the danger of being carried away, as is almost inevitable, by a series of repressive measures and reprisals, into an unlimited extension of territory.

To attain this end a system had to be established which should depend not only on reason, which may be elastic,

but on geographical and political conditions, which are fixed and permanent.

This system was suggested to us by a very simple fact, the result of long experience, namely, that the nomad tribes, which can neither be seized nor punished, nor effectually kept in order, are our most inconvenient neighbours ; while, on the other hand, agricultural and commercial populations attached to the soil, and possessing a more advanced social organisation, offer us every chance of gaining neighbours with whom there is a possibility of entering into relations.

Consequently, our frontier line ought to swallow up the former, and stop short at the limit of the latter.

These three principles supply a clear, natural, and logical explanation of our last military operations in Central Asia. In fact, our original frontier line, extending along the Syr-Daria to Fort Perovski on one side, and on the other to the Lake Issik-Kul, had the drawback of being almost on the verge of the desert. It was broken by a wide gap between the two extreme points ; it did not offer sufficient resources to our troops, and left unsettled tribes over the border with which any settled arrangement became impossible.

In spite of our unwillingness to extend our frontier, these motives had been powerful enough to induce the Imperial Government to establish this line between Lake Issik-Kul and the Syr-Daria by fortifying the town of Chimkent, lately occupied by us. By the adoption of this line we obtain a double result. In the first place, the country it takes in is fertile, well wooded, and watered by numerous water-courses ; it is partly inhabited by various Kirghiz tribes, which have already accepted our rule ; it consequently offers favourable conditions for colonisation and the supply of provisions to our garrisons. In the second place, it puts us in the immediate neighbourhood of the agricultural and commercial populations of Khokand. We find ourselves in presence of a more solid and compact, less

unsettled, and better organised social state; fixing for us with geographical precision the limit up to which we are bound to advance, and at which we must halt; because, while, on the one hand, any further extension of our rule, meeting, as it would, no longer with unstable communities, such as the nomad tribes, but with more regularly constituted States, would entail considerable exertions, and would draw us on from annexation to annexation with unforeseen complications. On the other, with such States for our future neighbours, their backward civilisation and the instability of their political condition do not shut us out from the hope that the day may come when regular relations may, to the advantage of both parties, take the place of the permanent troubles which have up to the present moment paralysed all progress in those countries.

Such, Sir, are the interests which inspire the policy of our august master in Central Asia; such is the object, by His Imperial Majesty's orders, of the action of his Cabinet.

You are requested to take these arguments as your guide in any explanations you may give to the Government to which you are accredited, in case questions are asked or you may see credence given to erroneous ideas as to our action in these distant parts.

It is needless for me to lay stress upon the interest which Russia evidently has not to increase her territory, and, above all, to avoid raising complications on her frontiers which can but delay and paralyse her domestic development.

The programme which I have just traced is in accordance with these views.

Very frequently of late years the civilisation of these countries, which are her neighbours on the continent of Asia, has been assigned to Russia as her special mission.

No agent has been found more apt for the progress of civilisation than commercial relations. Their development requires everywhere order and stability; but in Asia it demands a complete transformation of the habits of the

people. The first thing to be taught to the populations of Asia is that they will gain more in favouring and protecting the caravan trade than in robbing it. These elementary ideas can only be accepted by the public where one exists; that is to say, where there is some organised form of society and a Government to direct and represent it.

We are accomplishing the first part of our task in carrying our frontier to the limit where the indispensable conditions are to be found.

The second we shall accomplish in making every effort henceforward to prove to our neighbouring States, by a system of firmness in the repression of their misdeeds, combined with moderation and justice in the use of our strength, and respect for their independence, that Russia is not their enemy, that she entertains towards them no ideas of conquest, and that peaceful and commercial relations with her are more profitable than disorder, pillage, reprisals, and a permanent state of war.

The Imperial Cabinet, in assuming this task, takes as its guide the interests of Russia. But it believes that, at the same time, it is promoting the interests of humanity and civilisation. It has a right to expect that the line of conduct it pursues and the principles which guide it will meet with a just and candid appreciation.

(Signed) GORTCHAKOW.

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